25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

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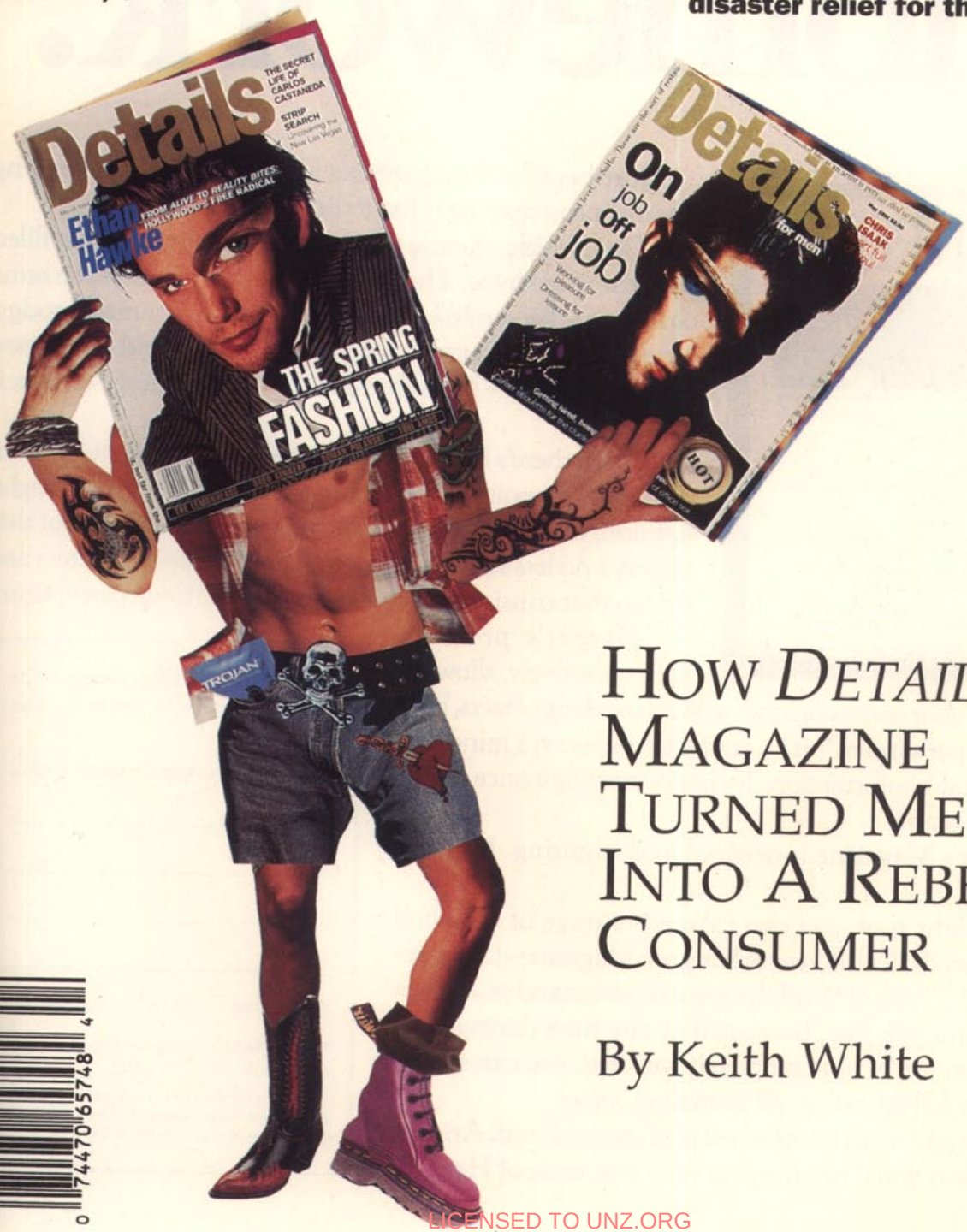
David Halberstam on Murray Kempton

An Arkansas reporter on the great Whitewater snipe hunt

Michael Crichton on James Fallows and Japan

Richard Reeves: The case against disaster relief for the rich



How *Details* Magazine Turned Me Into A Rebel Consumer

By Keith White

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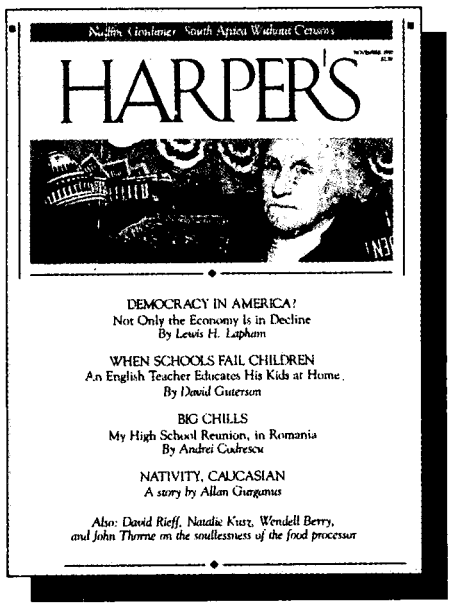

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The Washington Monthly

Volume 26, Number Four April 1994

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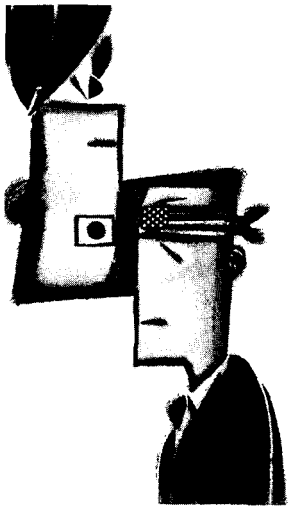

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Letters

Trade War

James Fallows complaining about the shallowness of the American media ["Rush to Judgment," January/February]? There's a joke. Fallows couldn't say grace without turning it into a diatribe on how great industrial policy is, how well it has worked for Japan, why the U.S. should have it, blah blah blah. Meanwhile, Japan is in serious trouble, and its people are increasingly bitter and frustrated.

Will Japan bounce back? Of course. Its people are hard-working and have a lust for education and self-improvement. But Japan's recovery will come in spite of, not thanks to, its heavy-handed and corrupt government.

Jonathan D. Muehl
Pittsburgh, PA

James Fallows replies: Let us consider each element of Mr. Muehl's carefully reasoned and well documented argument.

● Neither in this article nor anywhere else have I said how "great" industrial policy is. Indeed, the only point that this article made about Japan is the one Mr. Muehl says he agrees with: that it is far too early to count the Japanese economy out. Apparently it must be some other writing of mine that has gotten him riled up—and those other writings have made three main points about industrial policy.

(1) That it is regarded in Japan, Korea, and elsewhere as having been a crucial element of their industrial success. A handful of English-speaking management consultants and editorial-page writers dispute this finding. No serious historian of the Asian economies does.

(2) That it is inherently harder for America to carry out an industrial policy than it is for Japan, Korea, Germany, France, or many other countries, for political, historical, and cultural reasons.

(3) That nonetheless the United States has, within its own peculiar cultural and political limits, occasionally applied successful "industrial policies."

The clearest example is America's 20th-century policy of stimulating the home-building industry. It follows all the classic rules of industrial policies that have worked in East Asia. (The government has "intervened" in the market, through the mortgage-interest deduction and other means, to direct more money toward home-building than it would otherwise receive. This is comparable to Japanese or Korean interventions to direct capital towards the semi-conductor or machine-tool industries. After steering money toward housing, the U.S. government has left subsequent operating details to the private market—to construction companies, individual purchasers, real estate agents, and all the other private entities which decide what kinds of houses will be built, where, and for what price. Similarly, having steered money toward certain industries, the Japanese or Korean governments have relied on normal market competition among their companies to determine what products should be built, for what markets, and for what price. Asian governments require certain conditions of industries, in return for this government favoritism: For instance, they are supposed to meet targets for export growth, or invest in R&D. Similarly, the U.S. government imposes conditions on the housing market. For instance, transactions underwritten by the FHA or VA cannot involve racial discrimination.)

Most of what I have written about Japan concerns point 1: that THE JAPANESE THEMSELVES see their industrial policy as having been crucial to their success. We need not apply any such policy here, but we should understand how they see the world.

● The Japanese are in "serious trouble." Well, their stock market is, and so is the Liberal Democratic Party, which has been kicked out of the prime ministership for the first time since 1955. Yet many of the fundamentals of the Japanese economy remain far stronger than America's. The per-capita savings rate in Japan is more than four times as high as that in America. The industrial investment rate is about twice as high. Together these mean the Japanese industries can afford to make mistakes—as they did in their choice of an HDTV standard—that would ruin competitors in the United States.

During the last two years, Japan's

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domestic economy has stagnated, American car makers have won back market share within the United States and the American press has declared "Victory" over Japanese industry. Yet during those same years Japan's world-wide market share in most high-tech industries has held steady or increased. That is, in the fastest-growing markets in the world, the markets outside the United States, Japanese companies continue to gain ground. This success is most dramatic in the fastest-growing markets of all, those in Japan's neighboring countries in East Asia.

● This recovery will come "in spite" of Japan's government, not because of it. Here we have the familiar all-or-nothing thinking that I criticized in my article and that has made it so hard to come to terms with what Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and other countries have achieved. The success of the Japanese-style economic system rests on its skillful *combination* of government guidance and private competition. This concept should not be too difficult for Americans to grasp. After all, the same is true of U.S. industries from home-building to medical care to aerospace. But as long as Americans like Mr. Muehl think that economies are run by industry, or by government, but never by a combination of the two, we'll continue to be puzzled by the world's fastest-growing economies.

Class Dismissed

Thank you for reminding us periodically of the ongoing teaching scandal, one of the greatest rackets of our time ["Tilting at Windmills," January/February]. But please remember that the scandal is not just that the famous teach little; it is that practically *nobody* at *any* college teaches more than 3 to 6 periods a week, except for teaching assistants.

When Charles Peters was at Columbia, I was at the University of Wisconsin, living in the household of a distinguished language professor. He taught four classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and spent the other days playing piano, tending his garden, and writing his books. Not a bad deal then, and it wouldn't be a bad one now. One way to lower outrageous tuitions would be to halve the faculties and double the loads. I forbear extended comment on the absurdly short academic year.

William S. Rogers
Middletown, RI

Service Call

Phil Keisling makes points well worth considering for our young people as we approach the 21st century ["Make National Service Mandatory," January/February]. I believe, however, there is one other benefit of national service that he did not mention.

The process of coming to grips with making decisions that affect our lives is usually a difficult and scary one for the young, and the fear of "making a mistake" and having your "whole life" ruined often creates a sort of paralysis that is a tough hurdle to jump. The benefit I envision in national service is that it would give our young people an intermediate choice, a first step in experiencing the process of making choices. Further, since such service would be required of all, everyone would have a first level decision/experience platform from which to launch his/her adult life.

Keisling is correct, I believe, in looking on national service as a good investment for our society as a whole. Less easy to quantify, however, is the potential such a program has for the emotional comfort level of our young citizens as they prepare to face the bewildering world of adult decision-making.

Mary Alice Lee
Roads End, OR

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Tilting at Windmills

"I really think this is going to be a case of petty stuff. . . . My guess is this will turn out, when Fiske is done, when the special prosecutor is done, it's not going to be terrible crimes."

That was *Newsweek*'s Evan Thomas talking about Whitewater at the beginning of the March 6 "Inside Washington." Yet two-thirds of the show that followed was devoted to Whitewater. The same has been true of "The McLaughlin Group" and of conversations at almost every social gathering in Washington so far this spring. Just a few words here and there about health care, Bosnia, and the West Bank. Does this make any sense at all?

All of us knew long before the election that Bill Clinton has a tendency to shade the truth and cut corners on issues of his personal conduct—remember the draft and Gennifer Flowers—but most of us decided that it was worth the risk to elect a man as bright as Clinton and as interested as he is in the real problems facing the country.

So let's assume the Clintons are guilty of all possible charges that could conceivably arise from the Whitewater affair. Would we then want to see the president impeached? If not, do we want to see a large part of Clinton's presidency taken up not with being president but with defending himself and his wife against allegations in the press or that might be made by the special prosecutor and congressional investigators? I think we want a president who will concentrate on the nation's problems and not on his own.

He and his wife have been so defensive about Whitewater that the rest of us are probably justified in assuming the worst. So let's do just that—assume they're guilty of everything, then realize that even so, we don't want—nor are we likely to have grounds for—an impeachment. If we do this, we'll spare the president and the country an enormous distraction from the great issues he and we should be focusing on.

Then journalists like Thomas and his Washington colleagues can spend their time worrying about more important things, such as the three Clinton reforms the *Monthly* appraises in this issue or on his health proposals and alternatives such as the Canadian plan. . . .

The New York Times recently ran a photo of a crime scene. I counted nine cops in the picture. One was taking a step. Another was also taking a step and

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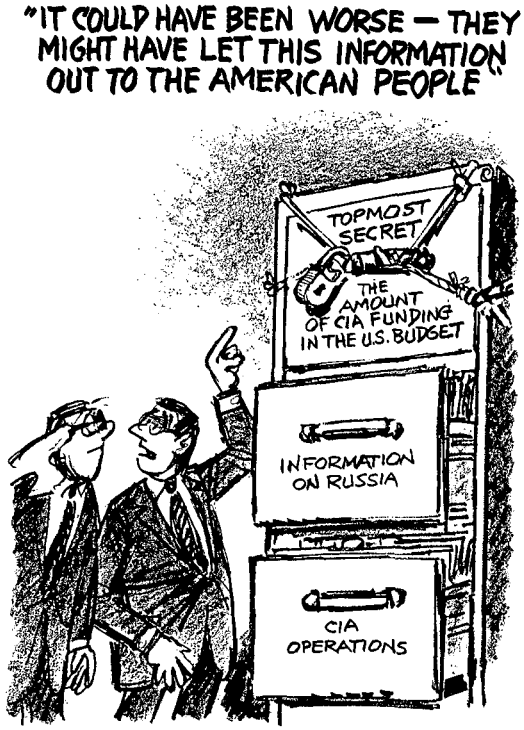
seemed to be looking for something on the sidewalk. The other seven were just standing there. When you're being throttled by a mugger and screaming for help, you can be sure there won't be a cop within a mile. But once you've been robbed and beaten and especially when you've been killed, squad cars will nearly collide with each other in their rush to the scene. When they arrive, most of the cops are sure to do nothing much but stand around. I suspect they even practice standing around, hands on hips, hands clasped behind back—the vigilant look. The answer to the shortage of police officers might be to add none but to simply forbid standing around at crime scenes. . . .

Speaking of crime, prisoners convicted of first-degree murder serve an average of 6.5 years in prison. In the federal prison system, inmates with no current or prior violence on their records are serving 5.5 years. Shouldn't the latter groups be doing a lot less time and the former a lot more? . . .

It is clear that when the Three Stooges stopped making films, they went into the security branch of the Central Intelligence Agency. The scandal of the Ames case is not that the Russians were spying on us, but the terrible incompetence of the jokers at the CIA who took practically forever to attach any significance to purchases and deposits that were obviously beyond Ames' means. As this magazine has been trying to warn you, the quality of public employees has seriously declined. If the Ames case is not enough to convince you, remember the disastrous raid the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms conducted on the Branch Davidians at Waco. Or consider the nine NASA employees who were just arrested for taking part in a bribery scheme.

Cash corruption used to be very rare in the federal service. Alger Hiss and Henry Dexter White betrayed their country out of conviction, out of love of an idea. All the recent traitors have done it for dough, including Ames, Eddy L. Howard, Richard W. Pelton, Jonathan Jay Pollard, John A. Walker, Jr., Jerry Whitworth, Larry Wu-Tai Chin, and Richard W. Miller. Many of these fellows were just like Ames. They were not only crooks but they were spectacularly inept, so much so that they would have been caught immediately had it not been for the ineptness of their fellow government employees. If Bill Clinton and Al Gore don't face this problem of employee quality, all their efforts to reinvent government will come to naught. . . .

Not long ago, I had a chance to discuss the CIA at length with a friend who has recently seen it in action at a major foreign capital. The two things that struck him most about the CIA contingent were its modest quality and its immodest size. As to size—I have already burdened you with my thoughts about quality—he revealed to me that at his post there were as many CIA professionals as there were foreign service officers—in other words, as many spooks as there were diplomats. Why can't we be told the number of people employed by the CIA? And why can't we be told the size of its budget? As the facts about the Ames case were emerging, Herblock published the above cartoon, which I thought underscored the utter lunacy of protecting the agency's budget better than its legitimate secrets. . . .



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Speaking of Herblock, I have always felt special affection for the role he played in preserving my sanity during the dreary fifties when humor was such a rarity in political discourse. Another oasis in the journalistic desert of that time was Murray Kempton, to whom David Halberstam pays tribute in this issue. Murray was funny when most columnists thought they had

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to be solemn, stylistically original when everyone tried to write like Walter Lippmann, and really reported in an era when most pundits thought a phone conversation or a lunch with a prominent source represented the outer limit of investigative zeal. . . .

When it comes to log rolling, chumminess, and conflicts of interest, this magazine may seem to be the Rose Law Firm of journalism. We have on several occasions given our annual book award to one of our contributing editors or to a member of our Editorial Advisory Board. This year's award, for example, went to Richard Reeves, who, cynics might allege, is repaying us with his article in this issue, which also has the article by David Halberstam, another member of the editorial board, who is saluting still another member, Murray Kempton. We also have a favorable review of contributing editor James Fallows' new book written by Michael Crichton, who had already authored a promotional blurb for the dust jacket of the book. And we also have, in a book review by contributing editor Timothy Noah, a respectful quotation of another contributing editor, Michael Kinsley. The purest expression of this art form may come when I, as I must confess I have done now and then, approvingly quote myself.

But you can count on us to have a theory that covers our apparent sins. It is that conflicts of interest are inevitable in this life. As, you guessed it, one of our contributing editors once put it in these pages: "Is it a conflict of interest for a mother to have a second child?"

More specifically, should we have denied recognition of books like Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters*, Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land*, or Mickey Kaus' *The End of Equality* simply because the authors once worked here?

The key is to be blatant about the conflicts. If they are right out there for the public to see, the public can judge whether there is corruption in our admiration for these writers or in theirs for one another or in their contributions to the *Monthly*.

If Hillary Clinton had sent a copy of her letter to the state securities commissioner to the Arkansas newspapers or found some other way of making it public, she would have met our standard. Not having done so, she left herself subject to suspicion. . . .

New York City's Board of Education has 83,883 employees, but only 53,734 are teachers. What the rest do all day has become a matter of more than passing interest to New York officials who are trying to close a $2 billion budget gap. The Board has contended that there are only 3,500 administrators at its headquarters at 110 Livingston Street. But it now appears that at least 7,000 work there, not including the hundreds of consultants who always seem to attach themselves to pedagogical institutions. Some 2,800 other employees work in the offices of the city's 32 community school districts, where they spend much of their time dealing with demands for information from the administrators at 110 Livingston. "We have duplication of labor that is unbelievable," one of the district administrators told *The New York Times*. "I am willing to downsize my office if they downsize central. I have 50 percent of the people here responding to 50 percent of the people downtown."

Included among all these excess administrators are at least 1,000 who used to be teachers. What happens in so many school systems is that the only way teachers can get a significant salary—or respect, which is often more important—is by becoming administrators. And sometimes good teachers do not turn out to be good admin-

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istrators—as, in my own field, some good reporters aren't good editors. It makes sense to put these people back into teaching as the New York teachers union is urging. Of course, that still leaves about 20,000 non-teaching employees to be accounted for.

New York isn't alone. Many urban public schools are notorious for excessive administrative staffs. The last time we looked, Chicago's parochial school administrators totalled 32, while the public schools required 100 times more administrators to oversee just twice as many students . . . .

W. Ann Reynolds, the Chancellor of the City University of New York, is paid a salary of $158,000 a year, provided a free town house on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and given a car and $140,000 for expenses. She also, to the dismay of some taxpayers, earns $140,000 by serving on five corporate boards which require her to make at least two trips per month to attend board meetings. Instead of waiting to cash in after her public service as is the custom among Washingtonians who capitalize on their public service, Reynolds is cashing in while in office. Other public university officials do the same. Why is this acceptable for them and not for other public officials?

Veteran readers of this column will remember Reynolds for her ingenious evasion of state purchasing restrictions while she was Chancellor of the State University of California in the eighties. Wanting to give her vice-chancellors cars so they would not have to endure the indignity of checking vehicles out of the motor pool, but facing a $100,000 limit on purchases that did not have to be reported publicly, Reynolds bought 6 Tauruses at a total cost of $99,998.70. . . .

"End of Forced Retirement Worries Colleges" and "Universities Fear Some Professors Will Wear Out Their Welcome," were two of the headlines *The Washington Post* recently ran over an article about the cost of the abolition of mandatory retirement for college professors. Citing the fact that almost 60 percent of all university faculty is tenured, the article explained that this meant schools that used to be able to get rid of their tenured deadwood with mandatory retirement have now lost even that weapon.

The *Post* article did not mention the *Monthly*'s solution to this problem. (Shouldn't *Post* reporters be required to commit each issue of the *Monthly* to memory or at least keep an index in their computers for ready references when they need guidance?) The *Monthly*'s solution to both the tenure and the mandatory retirement problem is the 1-3-5 year contract. Faculty members should be hired first for one year, then for three, and then for five. They then can be extended for five-year terms on the condition that they are doing a good job.

As things stand now, universities have no way of getting rid of the teachers who have lost their skill or never had it. But would the end of tenure threaten academic freedom? No, because you still couldn't be fired during the term of your contract. So it depends on how much you think your expression of freedom should involve at least some courage on your part. Is it asking too much that when you stand up for principle you risk losing your job five years from now? . . .

In the event of a serious nuclear power plant accident, thyroid cancer is one of the greatest dangers to the people nearby who are exposed to radiation. That danger can be significantly reduced if a ten-cent pill is available for their immediate use. Yet the pill (potassium iodide) is not required to be stockpiled at nuclear plant sites. *The Washington Post*'s Cindy Skrzycki looked into why such an inexpensive precaution has not been taken and found that the Nuclear Management and Resource Council, a nuclear power industry group, opposes stockpiling because "predistribution and the associated public education would result in a potentially significant negative public perception." . . .

Most Clinton foreign policy decisions, Susan Threadgill reports in this month's "Who's Who," are being made by Strobe Talbott, Tony Lake, Samuel Berger, Peter Tarnoff, and Frank Wisner. The problem is that they have difficulty when it comes to actually making the decisions. Their skills are more evidenced in the processes leading up to the decision, where they are very good at presenting and examining options. One reason for this is, as David Ignatius (a former *Monthly* editor, by the way, who managed to quote two

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other former *Monthly* editors in making his case) recently pointed out in *The Washington Post*, they have spent too much time attending conferences that place the highest value on one's performance as a discussor. Another thought that occurred to me is that many of these men spent long apprenticeships in special assistant roles which also put the highest premium on briefing skill—the ability to lay out the issues for the official who will make the decision. . . .

Two-thirds of the people in Seattle know how to administer C.P.R. In many smaller cities and towns the percentage is even higher. In New York, the figure is only 10 percent. All of which helps explain this recent headline in the *Times*: "When New Yorkers' Hearts Stop, Very Few Live." There is a lesson in all this. When I lived in New York, I was amazed at how many people would step over the person on the subway floor instead of bending down to ask if they could help. I would mutter indignantly to myself, "people wouldn't behave so callously in my home town."

Of course, I was stepping over the body, too. In the anonymity of the big city, there is no sense of shame—or not enough to prompt action—because no one is going to tell your mother or your friends that you failed to behave decently. In a small town, you're more likely to behave considerately because your reputation will suffer if you don't. Why am I talking about this in a magazine that's supposed to be about politics and government? Well, sometimes of course my mind just strays. But this time there is some relevance. Government officials, with the exception of a handful of dedicated saints, will do their best only if it's noticed. That's why it's so important for the spotlight to be cast on them by the press, the GAO, the OMB, and congressional oversight committees often enough to make sure they know that the light might just be pointed in their direction at the very moment they're getting into mischief. . . .

Back to the CIA for a moment. The press and the president and Congress must be alert to the fact that this is an agency in search of a mission to replace the one it lost with the winding down of the Cold War. What trouble will they cook up? There is good reason to believe that the agency was behind many of the recent alarms about North Korea. The fellows out at Langley know that reminding us of the dangers of nuclear proliferation will also remind us that we still need them. The dangers may be real, but at most they justify an ongoing presence in only a dozen or so countries. . . .

For our Safe Answer contest, here's a nominee for the surest S.A. in Italy: Prego. By the way, I have a new contest: What do Rich People Worry About? Sample Answer: The point at which the Concorde will succumb to metal fatigue. . . .

On a January day when Washington had been shut down by an ice storm, 25 workers showed up at the Capitol. What essential task of government prompted these dedicated public servants to brave the elements and report to duty? They were reporting to the House Folding Room to help get out the newsletters members send to their districts. Why, you may ask, is this activity treated as such an emergency? Because the newsletters can't be sent out fewer than 60 days before an election. And in case you didn't know, the newsletters are taxpayer-funded propaganda on behalf of the incumbent congressmen who are desperate to try to brainwash their constituents as close as the law permits to the date those dear souls will cast their ballots. . . .

If you're a true lover of politics, exciting national conventions are among the high points of your life. Two of the three best that have occurred in my lifetime are reasonably well known: Wendell Willkie's sixth ballot, come-from-behind victory at the Republican convention in 1940 and John Kennedy's hair's-breadth loss to Estes Kefauver in the vice-presidential contest at the 1956 Democratic convention. Less well-known is the story of Henry Wallace's loss of the vice-presidential nomination to Harry Truman in 1944. Wallace, who led on the first ballot, might have won the nomination had balloting not been postponed by the party bosses, who in those days could usually dominate conventions. The bosses supported Truman and realized that the Wallace forces, emulating Willkie, had packed the galleries and seemed to have the delegates ready to stampede to Wallace. Robert H. Ferrell, in his new book, *Choosing Truman*, tells the story of how the bosses saved Truman by adjourning the convention for

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a day to give themselves time to get the situation under control. . . .

Have you heard about the expensive birthday parties parents are throwing for little Jason and Jennifer? *The Washington Post* reports that one such event recently cost $3,800 and featured a moon bounce, a dunk tank, a ball crawl, a train ride, a Ferris wheel, Minnie Mouse, Mickey Mouse, Baby Bop, Barney, Ninja Turtles, and games. $375 is the standard fee for a two hour party by a typical area catering service. "It has become socially competitive," Donna Hart, the publisher of *Parent and Child* magazine told the *Post*. "If the party is not exciting, it's embarrassing for the child." The magazine lists 120 entertainment services in its current issue.

I know you're saying, "Let's see the sonuvabitch connect *this* to politics and government!" Well, I can't. But it is part of the dismaying social trend in which parents spend more money on their children because of guilt over spending so little time with them. "If I wanted to go to all the trouble of setting up treasure hunts, my daughter would enjoy it just as much," says one mother, "but where would I get the time." . . .

The number of nervous lawyers has to be in the hundreds of thousands. All this talk about overbilling. Webster Hubbell on the front pages; *The Firm* on practically everyone's VCR. The message of the film is especially unsettling, suggesting as it does that criminal liability might ensue from the simple act of using the United States Postal Service to deliver an inflated invoice for legal services.

Overbilling is one of the great traditions of American law, one of the few that has consistently been honored more in the practice than in the breach. To be blunt, overcharges ranging from the occasional to the habitual are customary among most lawyers and almost all large law firms. But, in my opinion, the partners need fret no more. The law cited in *The Firm* would have to be enforced by prosecutors and judges, most of whom were once in private practice and who are thus highly unlikely to put others in the slammer for sins they have committed themselves. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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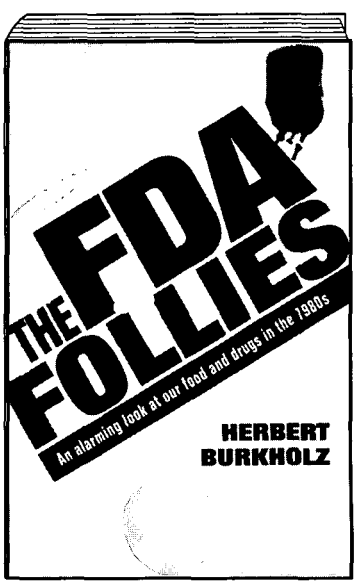

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Hurricane$, Earthquake$, and Flood$

If people want to build their houses in dangerous places, why should the rest of us pay when disaster strikes?

BY RICHARD REEVES

"We should not provide federal funds to rebuild private property!" wrote Fred Morley of Free Union, Virginia, to his senator, John Warner, as Congress voted to send more than $8.6 billion in emergency aid to California after the Los Angeles earthquake of January 17. "These people live in California voluntarily. Insurance was available, but many reported that they didn't buy it because of the cost. Why should this Virginian provide the insurance with my tax monies that the Californians voluntarily elected not to buy for themselves? That's wrong! . . . We need to rethink the whole concept of emergency aid from Washington. Just like those people living on the rivers in the Midwest, they knew the risk."

Warner put the letter in the *Congressional Record*, noting: "We have to recognize that there are geographical areas in this country that are highly vulnerable to disaster and somehow recognize that we cannot go back to the American taxpayer time after time to rebuild the freeways, to restore the military bases, to rebuild the levees."

You got it, Virginians, there is a Santa Claus. It's you—and millions of other taxpayers who, one way or another, subsidize Californians and other folks rich enough, lucky enough, or foolish enough to live at water's edge or in the picturesque path of fire, mudslide, or tremors. The rest of us pay indirectly in the form of higher insurance premiums on safer ground or directly in the kind of emergency aid that prompted Mr. Morley's letter.

Subsidizing the lifestyles of the rich and famous, you see, is part of living in the home of the free and the land of the brave. And perhaps part of what makes the rich different from you and me is that they are braver. They live or vacation in the most dangerous of places—in Malibu, Fire Island, and Westhampton Beach, along the coast in Florida and South Carolina, on the Great Lakes, and along the great rivers that divide the Midwest.

Those, of course, are also among the most beautiful (and most expensive) places to live in the country. I know because I make it a point to try to live as close as possible to my financial betters—usually just renting, but the view doesn't know that. Right

Richard Reeves is a syndicated columnist and the author of President Kennedy: Profile of Power *(1993).*

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now I live in Pacific Palisades, California, across the road from Arnold Schwarzenegger's place (with a moat separating it from the rest of the country), and down the hill from where Ronald Reagan lived before he became president.

As I write this, I am looking across the greens of the Riveria Country Club to Catalina Island, 26 miles across the sea on my right, and, to the left, the snowcap of Mount Baldy more than 50 miles away. The Palisades, by the way, are above the smog line. The height of the Palisades can, however, cause some problems. In the earthquake of last January 17, a few houses not far from me ended up below the smog line—on the Pacific Coast Highway, to be exact. I'm sure you saw the pictures.

In summers past, I rented on Dune Road in Westhampton Beach, New York, writing a book as I looked across the Atlantic. I imagined the next landfall was France, though actually it was New Jersey—which is where the house ended up, in pieces, after a hurricane in 1978.

That was also the year I moved to Pacific Palisades for the first time—on October 23, 1978. Within an hour after we settled in, we were preparing to evacuate as brushfires moved across the far ridge of our canyon, driven by winds of 50 miles an hour. I watched eight houses explode into puffs of bright gas just before the flames passed by us. My first earthquake was 69 days later—a 4.6 on the Richter scale, on January 1, 1979. I then realized something: Nature never meant for 10 million people to live in the Los Angeles basin, and nature wanted the basin back.

The fires of 1978 were, as fires always are, followed by mudslides. Without the root systems of gnarled little trees and other brush to hold the land in place, a little rain moves more earth than a fleet of John Deere tractors. For days that October, television news was dominated by movie producers and other Malibu folk telling sob stories and demanding that the government build a wall to stop the slides on the other side of Pacific Coast Highway. And the state did just that, with the help of federal emergency aid—all for a dozen rich people living on the beach.

On the other coast, 3,000 miles away, ocean storms in December of 1992 and March of last year swept away 81 homes on Fire Island, New York, which, like Westhampton Beach, is basically a long sandbar off the south shore of Long Island. Most of the Fire Island homes, which are summer houses, will be rebuilt with storm and flood insurance money by policies that cost as little as $900 a year. In the Midwest, the annual rates on homes along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers are as low as $300 for a $185,000 home.

Obviously, no insurance company willingly would offer those kinds of rates for homes on stilts in shifting sands where neither God nor law meant for man to settle. But under the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, the federal government mandates that insurers cover those homes and at least 2.6 million others on an assigned-risk basis. In

Sean Kelly

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simple terms, everyone else in the country pays higher taxes and insurance premiums to protect property that is uninsurable under any rational system. The total value of those subsidized policies is a staggering $248 billion.

Like many other government programs, the 1974 act is a good idea become bad law. The idea was the federal government would use flood insurance as a lever by only offering it where state and local governments adopted and enforced building codes that prevented new building in dangerous coastal and flood areas, and required upgrading or moving buildings in obvious danger—my house at 714 Dune Road in Westhampton Beach was a perfect example before it floated to New Jersey.

The law failed from the start. It was bailed out with $1.2 billion of federal funds in the early 1980s and may be headed for another taxpayer-financed rescue because of the $30 billion of damage caused last year by the horrific Midwestern floods and by Hurricane Andrew in Florida in 1992. The reason for the failure was the unwillingness of local and state officials to displease developers lusting after beach and riverfront property. State and local politics, in general, is driven by real estate money, including contributions from developers and builders. The career of Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York is a textbook example, and so far—with help in the House of Representatives from another New York Republican, Rep. Rick Lazio—D'Amato has been able to block reform of the Disaster Relief Act, screwing the rest of America to protect coastal homeowners and developers on Long Island.

Meanwhile in California, the last resort for homeowners seeking fire insurance in brush areas is the state's California Fair Plan Association, an assigned-risk program with 26,500 policyholders in areas where lightning has ignited brush fires in the hills since before there was a man or a woman on the planet—that is the way nature has always generated fertilizer (basically nitrates in the ash). New cycles of growth and new roots hold the hills in place above expensive coastal strips like Malibu, where for years not one home has sold for less than $1 million.

All Shook Up

The January earthquake in Los Angeles is dollar-for-dollar apparently going to be the worst natural disaster in American history—if you believe that it is natural to build great cities above great faults in the earth's crust. The total damage may reach $20 billion and by the middle of February, the number of applications for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance had reached 360,000, more than the previous high of 304,000 applications after Hurricane Hugo hit the South four years ago.

Most of the earthquake damage is not covered by insurance of any kind. There are a couple of quite natural reasons—natural in the sense of human nature—that this is so. People who live in potential disaster areas tend to avoid thinking about disasters. Earthquake is the most incomprehensible of threats and the most expensive to insure against—as high as $10 a year per $1,000 of coverage. The normal deductible is 10 percent of property value. Therefore most homeowners cannot get any kind of coverage for normal damage that costs less than the deductible: cracked walls, broken pipes or windows, crumbled chimneys in the living room.

So Californians, great Western individualists all, beginning with our Republican governor, Pete Wilson, want government on our backs this time. Actually, we want a ride on government's back. Our first official demands were that the rest of the nation pay for the risks we took to live in the sun by the sea. In fact, Californians have started joking that there *are* seasons here: fire, flood, earthquake, and riot. I'd add another: aid.

President Clinton said that because of the size of the quake, and the fact that California has had fire this year, too, *and* is in stubborn economic recession, he was recommending that the federal government waive its requirement that states put up 25 percent of disaster aid to match the federal share of 75 percent. Instead, Clinton said, California would have to put up only 10 percent. Not good enough, said Wilson. He was holding out for zero percent.

Paula Boland, the State Assemblywoman from Northridge, the community at the epicenter of the earthquake, agreed totally with the governor. Boland, whose home was hit hard enough to leave her sleeping in a car in case her house collapsed overnight, was asked by the *Los Angeles Times* whether she would favor a temporary state sales tax increase to finance relief and rebuilding after the after-shocks.

"No," she said. "People are taxed to death. We've got to start finding ways to conserve money."

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But surely, said the *Times* reporter, George Skelton, tax money was needed to rebuild broken freeways and such. "The feds," she said, "are going to have to come through for us. The president owes us. . . . They've taken our military bases and all those jobs. They're going to have to start giving something back to California."

That is the true voice of California, a state that feels owed to, a state that sees misfortune as somebody else's problem, always somebody else's fault. Even ignoring the fact that the federal government gets its money from taxation, too, it was the feds (or taxpayers in the rest of the country) who built the dams on the Colorado River that made the world-class development of Southern California possible and who created defense and aerospace industries that made the Southland, as we call it, so rich for so long so effortlessly.

You see, out here we all feel as if we live in Malibu—or should. Just pay up, so we can get back to complaining about Washington and big government. □

The Washington Monthly

JOURNALISM AWARD

FOR DECEMBER 1993
IS PRESENTED TO:

Clay Redden, Mike Salinero, and Keith Clines
The Decatur (Ala.) Daily

After Alabama Gov. Guy Hunt was convicted of illegally using inaugural funds for personal use, this 30,000-circulation paper took a locally unprecedented look at the political money chase. A 13-story series revealed a cozy political world in a small state with laughably lax campaign laws. There's no limit on PAC contributions, and PACs anted up $14.2 million in 1990 alone, enabling special interests to buy disproportionate influence in the state capital. And the series offered examples of reform, including limiting contributions and making disclosure more available to voters.

FOR JANUARY 1994
IS PRESENTED TO:

Dan Morgan
The Washington Post

In a four-part series, Morgan chronicles the explosion in Medicaid costs that began in the eighties. Beginning with legislative intrigue in Washington, where Rep. Henry Waxman and other lawmakers slipped a provision into law in 1990 that enabled Medicaid expenditures to rise at five times the inflation rate, Morgan walked readers through the $90 billion-a-year program which covers poor people and is one of the main reasons national health care is now at the center of debate. Morgan diligently told this story, ultimately explaining how, because of maddening bureaucracy, the poor still don't get adequate care.

Sharon LaFraniere
The Washington Post

LaFraniere picked apart the lax Farmers Home Administration loan program, which in the past five years has written off $11.5 billion in uncollectable loans and is carrying $5 billion worth on its books now. Instead of reciting bookkeeping reports, however, LaFraniere illustrated the point with fun examples like this: Southern California dentist John M. Mosby drives a Lincoln Town Car, owns an $817,000 beachfront house, and a four-seater airplane. He also owes FmHA $3.5 million, but nobody has tried to make him pay. Stories like these should turn up the political pressure to administer these programs with a grain of common sense.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

Nominations for stories published or aired in April will close May 15. The winner will be announced in the July/August issue.

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How *Details* Magazine Turned Me Into a Rebel Consumer

By merchandising nonconformity, Condé Nast's newest star has found a niche and 465,000 readers. But living the Details *life could cost you a fortune*

BY KEITH WHITE

I wanted to be a *Details* man. I had recognized my need for bee-stung lips, carefully unkempt hair, a washboard stomach, baggy Versace suits, tattoos—you get the picture. I wanted to pal around with other young sophisticates dressed just as rakishly as I, chatting about the latest trend in alternative music and last week's party with Drew, Ethan, Uma, and Keanu. I couldn't get what I needed from stodgy old *Esquire* or pretty-boy *GQ*. *Spin* might tell me how to dress and behave like Eddie Vedder, but its narrow focus—music—would leave me in the dark about important developments in ice climbing and seventies collectibles. The trio of British men's fashion mags (*The Face*, *Arena*, and *Sky*) were simply too expensive and too derivative for my tastes. *Details*, with its $2 cover price and its relentlessly macho attitude, promised to deliver the new me.

I think of *Details* as the Pearl Jam of the magazine world, the glittery showplace where rebellion, individualism, and nonconformity are conveniently packaged and paired with all of the correct accessories. And like Pearl Jam, *Details* knows how to translate nonconformity into sales. With the combination of Condé Nast's deep pockets, tremendous newsstand clout, and its unifying vision of the rebel as consumer, *Details*' circulation has leapt from 150,000 to over 450,000 in less than four years.

The magazine chronicles what I should buy, what I should wear, where I should go, what I should see, and what mass-culture offerings I should choose from. *Details* is a sort of Sears catalog with 'tude, the fabulous intermediary between the latest offerings of the nation's clothing and entertainment industries and excitement-starved people like me. And with its utilitarian, punk-inspired typeface and its fractured layout, a reader intent upon learning the secrets of youthful rebellion can be assured *Details* is serious about delivering.

Not that catering to the needs of the status-anxious is anything new. We Americans, as the *Monthly* has argued in the past, have long looked to magazines to guide us through the dizzying ar-

Keith White is co-editor of The Baffler *magazine.* Baffler *co-editor Thomas Frank provided additions to this article.*

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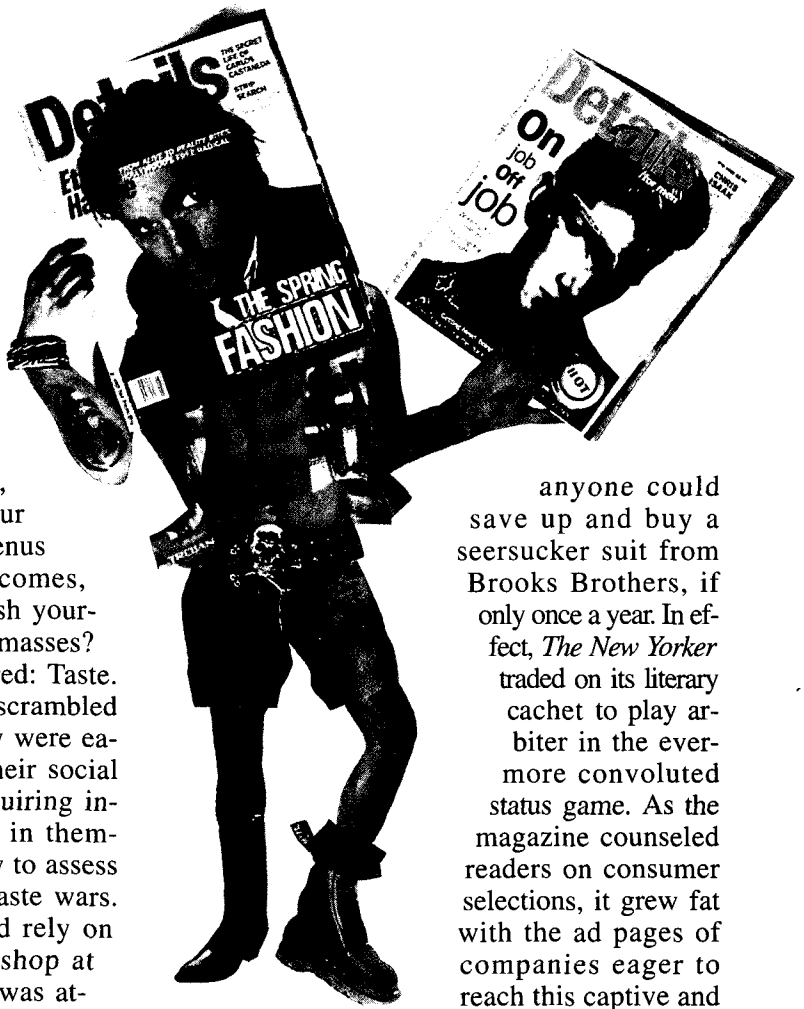
ray of consumer choices. The roots of this tendency, indeed the roots of *Details'* beguiling come-on, are easily traced to the years immediately following World War II. It was then that postwar prosperity and the GI Bill made a college education widely available, thus debasing the undergraduate diploma as the preeminent emblem of achievement and sophistication. When anyone could earn a sheepskin, how were you supposed to prove your refinement? And with so many parvenus blessed with large discretionary incomes, how were you supposed to distinguish yourself from others in the newly monied masses?

A one word solution was discovered: Taste. As members of the new middle class scrambled to improve their social standing, they were eager to adopt the accouterments of their social betters. But while spending and acquiring increasingly became sanctioned ends in themselves, questions remained about how to assess individual performance in the new taste wars. Whereas traditionally the rich could rely on the customs of heritage ("Always shop at Brooks Brothers"), the middle class was attempting to camouflage its roots. That's where magazines came in; many publications proved happy to play the role of discriminating doyenne.

For a solid 20 years, beginning in the forties, *The New Yorker* emerged as the dominant voice of taste—a reign remarkable not just for its duration, but for its demographics. *The New Yorker*, after all, catered to the over-30 crowd, not generally the sort insecure enough about themselves to be easy marks. (*Details* wisely targets the more insecure pre- and post-college types.) But the magazine knew its craft. With pronouncements on *this book* and *that art exhibit,* ads for the "correct" scotch and "right" clothes, *The New Yorker* functioned as a kind of consumer finishing school. And, helpfully, the products pushed—swishy liqueurs, silk ties—were tantalizingly affordable. Just about



anyone could save up and buy a seersucker suit from Brooks Brothers, if only once a year. In effect, *The New Yorker* traded on its literary cachet to play arbiter in the ever-more convoluted status game. As the magazine counseled readers on consumer selections, it grew fat with the ad pages of companies eager to reach this captive and suggestible audience.

Yet as the process of acquiring status became more complicated, readers sought more explicit instruction in the art of the buy. In the late sixties and early seventies, Clay Felker brought to life his vision of the chic, upscale, fantasy magazine for the urban middle class with *New York*, which was designed for a new generation of readers. With king-of-the-mountain bravado, Felker signaled his own magazine's arrival with fillips at the fusty, passé *New Yorker*. What panic and dyspepsia must have set in when hordes of older readers woke to discover that their beacon of chic had been deemed dowdy. Even as it asserted its bona fides, *New York* promised to offer more and clearer signals about how to consume. Recognizing the success of early articles in this genre, *New York* took to offering readers

Paul Forsyth

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pullout guidebooks on topics which *The New Yorker* would consider too vulgar to mention: where to ski, which summer house to buy, which private schools to send your children to—purchasing decisions new to most readers.

New York provided the goods—the inside dope on how to go about assessing such decisions—but in doing so, it raised the stakes. For implicit in such guidebooks was a new hierarchy. It wasn't enough to know to send your kids to boarding school, it was a matter of which one—and, to be sure, there was always at least one out of the reach of most *New York* readers. Those unattainable schools or apartments or summer homes were there to keep those who might feel they had it sussed just a little off-kilter. That was because *New York* offered a particularly fragile sort of status—the fashionable kind—and it wanted to make sure its readers remained uncomfortable enough to keep coming back for more from those truly in the know: namely, the editors. *New York*'s success was confirmed by a rash of identical glossies that emerged in most American cities.

The eighties saw the advent of *Spy* and *Vanity Fair*, which wove the "how tos" of taste and purchasing into the very text of each article. *Spy*'s innovation was offering helpful consumer hints in the guise of snobbish put-downs. For instance, in a piece about the demise of Times Square, the magazine approvingly sneered that it might "make Florsheim shoes harder to come by." What exactly is wrong with Florsheim shoes—they seem sturdy and stylish enough to the untrained eye—is a question left unanswered, the kind of if-you-have-to-ask omission designed to draw readers in and make them feel happily allied with the magazine's sense of humor as well as its commercial appetites. (The clear implication was that Florsheim shoes were lousy because they were so available, and thus so damn middle class.) Not spelling this out was typical of *Spy*'s approach to what's-hot-and-what's-not journalism. The point was never to argue for the cool; the cool explained itself, or more precisely it was cool because the folks on the masthead had decided it was so.

Vanity Fair writers used the vehicle of celebrity profiles to offer hints to readers about which brands of Italian loafers and mineral water were suitable. Readers are presumably thankful, having been given both valuable information on how to plan their next purchase as well as nifty cocktail party trivia and handy opinions. As the half-life of fashionable status became ever more compressed, these monthlies strained to stay one step ahead, keeping their readers slightly off-balance and anxious about their own standing on the tote board of hip. *Spy* played this game well, but apparently not well enough. Hemorrhaging talented editors and ad pages for years, the magazine which made its name lampooning the rich of the eighties seemed to wither with the scene that it loved to roil, and in February announced that it would soon expire. Ironically, Donald Trump, one of the magazine's favorite targets, showed up on the cover of *Vanity Fair* the same month that *Spy*'s imminent death was made public. The man who put Trump in *Vanity Fair*: editor-in-chief Graydon Carter, one of *Spy*'s original founders. Whatever moves the magazines.

Lollapalosers

Details may also be outpaced by its own definitions of hip, but don't count on that happening any time soon. After all, the magazine had its start as a hip downtown club sheet and chronicler of the Manhattan fashion scene, formidable credentials in my generation's worldview. The magazine added sinew to this potentially effeminate image by adopting the look of the early American punk scene, even recruiting rocker Henry Rollins to become part of the *Details* glitterati. The mannequins on which *Details* hangs its expensive clothes are rebels, with real tattoos to show how close they live to the edge.

Recognizing that *Details* was the real thing, my quest to become a *Details* man was hampered by an unnerving fear. How on earth was I going to reinvent myself month after month with the latest cool identities? How was I going to pass myself off as an aficionado of all these disparate trends when I knew nothing about them? *Details* had the answer. It didn't just fill me in about grunge, it gave me an encapsulated history of the movement, so I could wow my

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friends with my firm grasp of alternative arcana (Did you know that the Smashing Pumpkins' lead singer had a fling with Courtney Love while Kurt Cobain was still sleeping on the Melvins' front porch?). It even had a feature showing me how to alter my clothes so it looks like I've been a punk rocker for years. *Details* never introduces a new youth fashion without painstakingly delineating its rebel credibility.

Despite the whirlwind of trends, *Details* retains a unifying philosophical viewpoint: The archetypal American male is a rebel consumer. A recent issue that featured $300 silk Versace shirts also included a revealing apotheosis of Lollapalooza performers Anthony Kiedis and Henry Rollins as the quintessential men of the nineties. "These guys are not only musicians, or even rock stars," the magazine affirmed, "but modern men, emblems of a new masculinity." These "Rock and roll samurai live outside the law, but are bound by their own moral codes." The words used to describe this new man were exciting and fresh: explosive, individualist, all for one, self-styled, rebellious, existential, heroic, and—most appealing of all—nonconformist. (These attributes are presented as virtues in themselves. Absent is any sense that the magazine's self-styled, rebellious, existential hero should do or strive for anything beyond consuming.) Furthermore, *Details* was offering to show me how to buy the appropriate gear so I could become just as individualistic.

Others articles further impressed on me the magazine's guiding vision of alternative as a set of consumer choices. When *Details* pushes expensive bathing costumes, it pairs them not with suntanned frat boys, but with skinhead men with tattoos, Doc Martens boots, and leather jackets emblazoned with the names of hard-core bands from the eighties. A $900 silk shirt was photographed with the instructions, "Wear it loose with tight jeans and a rock and roll attitude." Another time it divulged which expensive home video games are preferred by the members of Faith No More. It treated me to a photo spread featuring Perry Farell, Billy Idol, and a member of the Stone Temple Pilots posing in the latest designer clothes. It showed me that I, too, could show the appropriate level of insouciance by lying down on my office couch while wearing the expensive clothes of designer Calvin Klein.

When *Details* pushes expensive bathing costumes, it pairs them not with suntanned frat boys, but with skinhead men with tattoos. A $900 silk shirt was photographed with the instructions, "Wear it loose with tight jeans and a rock and roll attitude."

And *Details* understood my abiding anxiety about falling behind the curve, and failing to purchase and display the appropriate books and CDs, emblems that would show that I, too, flouted convention. That's a kind of nervousness that is only exacerbated as one grows older and less daring, feeling further removed from the latest in youth culture. When fortysomething columnist and CNN pundit Michael Kinsley showed up at a party for Doug Coupland, the hot and newly anointed voice of "Generation X" (Coupland's own coinage), Kinsley told a reporter that he was there because he "wanted to know what the other generation is thinking." I could just about hear the tension in his voice as he uttered those words, even as I saw my own future pass before my eyes.

After drinking in a few issues, I was ready to become a *Details* man. Setting out right away, I got myself a few baggy suits and bought a copy of Rollins' poetry to display from my back pocket. I got a particularly menacing tattoo on my neck, bought the sort of car Anthony Kiedis drives, purchased some of Iggy Pop's brand of underwear, and wore one

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of Michael Stipe's characteristic hats. While I was spending my money, I thought I'd better pick up a few packs of Excita condoms, some sex-technique videos, and a few muscle building machines (all helpfully advertised in the back of each issue). Unfortunately, all of this paraphernalia cost me $150,000, and I was still behind the times—the next month's issue had just hit the newsstand.

But my greatest disappointment came in a more recent issue. Tucked away in the back pages of the magazine was an elaborate apologia to all readers who had been led astray by the misfires of *Details*' cultural divining rod. "Hypes and Sleepers" was a year-end scorecard on how the prognosticators had fared over the previous twelve months. Reading through the list—glam revival, cyberpunk revolution, jazz rap, girl grunge, Tabitha Soren—brought back painful memories, like the time I had showed up at a party wearing a tight purple jumpsuit and eyeliner only to find the room full of Beavis and Butthead manqués. But the people I really felt sorry for were the folks whose warehouses were full of now-unwanted platform spaceboots, minidisks, and virtual reality machines—trends which had received countless editorial pages as *Details* valiantly tried to convince its readership of their viability.

Perhaps the real secret to being a *Details* man lies in the magazine's recent apology: "Mass taste is perverse and unpredictable, [but] that's also why keeping tabs on it is so much fun." This statement of regret seems directed less to readers than to the magazine's true clients, the real *Details* men—the guys who manufacture these trends and make money off them: the editors and the advertisers. Perhaps this shouldn't have been such a shock. After all, it was the dollars of eager advertisers that helped keep magazines like *The New Yorker*, *New York*, *Vanity Fair*, and until recently, *Spy*, afloat despite the development of television and cable. While TV offered the mass marketer the mass consumer, magazines became venues where advertisers could reach a more specific audience, the "top of the pyramid," the segment that would consume their most upscale products. Once advertised in a magazine with trend-setting readers, any product can thus be differentiated and command a premium price from those nervous about their hip credentials. Look what Absolut did for plain old tasteless vodka in the eighties.

The difficulty with this approach in the nineties, of course, has been in developing a new segment, finding a package with the right credentials to slip past the ultra-sophisticated media sensors of a younger set of consumers. These are, of course, the fabled "twentysomethings," the by now monotonous subject of film, news program conjecture, and solemn editorial head-shaking. What the media wanted, when it talked about the undefined and mysterious "twentysomethings" in articles like those in *U.S. News & World Report*, *Advertising Age*, and *Business Week*, was not cultural expression, but some way of serving us up to the national marketers. The idea was to try to get us to care about and try to quench our own particular status anxiety and, eventually, to part with our money. *Details* saw the opening for a magazine which could accomplish this goal.

If ever thicker copies of the magazine weren't enough to prove its success, the people behind *Details* knew that it had pleased the right audiences when *Advertising Age* named it "Magazine of the Year," citing it for having "established itself as the leading media vehicle to reach Generation X." Indeed, publisher Mitchell Fox boasted of "delivering these twentysomething people to marketers in whatever way we can." Elements of that creativity include a column called "Hardware," devoted to items a would-be urban hipster should own, a monthly travel piece going so far as to give the phone numbers of the *Details*-approved places in which to hang out and spend your money, and an ongoing parade of new looks from the purveyors of too-expensive clothing and attitude.

In the end, *Details*' message is no different than any other lifestyle magazine: Who you are depends on what you consume, and how hip you are depends on how enthusiastically you keep up with the new. Nonconformity may be the language, but fashion is, as ever, the logic. □

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The Call to Service

The program has laudable ambition, but unless participants are allowed to perform real jobs, Clinton's plan will be remembered for its symbolic value, not its good works

BY ALAN GREENBLATT

Last September, on the South Lawn, President Clinton sported a flashy tie and surrounded himself with young Americans to celebrate the signing of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Not only were the trappings distinctly Clintonian—the president clapping and beaming—but the bill was typical Clinton, too: the right idea, founded on the best of motives, but still coming up disturbingly short of the truest, best reform. "National service," the president exulted, "will remain throughout the life of America not as a series of promises but a series of challenges, across all the generations and all walks of life to help push to rebuild our troubled but wonderful land."

To hear the president tell it, you would think thousands of young people were marching forth to do important work the country needs: teaching, policing, helping out in busy hospitals, nursing homes, and shelters. But read the law and take a hard look at the Clinton pilot projects, and you get the sinking sense that the reality of national service could be very different.

Take the coming Summer of Safety, a lofty three-month project to respond, in the words of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), "to the growing fear of and frustration over the levels of crime and violence in every part of the country." Thirty-five hundred young Americans will get a subsistence wage and $1,000 educational vouchers to take on one of the country's most intractable issues. Problem is, the whole program just lasts the summer, which is hardly enough time to get off the bus, much less defuse fear of violent crime. Not that CNCS would let a national service corps member do anything remotely like police work anyway: Participants can't be involved in making arrests, collecting evidence, or "witnessing criminal incidents which may result in participants being called as witnesses in adjudicatory proceedings." (How CNCS figures a participant will know when or

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where he might witness a crime is anybody's guess. The Washington bureaucrats apparently think malefactors announce their crimes in advance.)

Of course, when you're talking about 17 to 23-year-olds dropping in for the summer, it's sensible not to put them in assignments too dangerous for them to handle. That's not the trouble. The trouble is that the Clintonite national service people like to pretend they're really doing something when they're actually doing nothing. After all, it can take at least three months just to *train* someone to do real work. But there is no indication that what is true of the summer pilots—the Summer of Safety and its politically correct predecessor, the 1993 Summer of Service in which the participants subdivided into caucuses based on everything from race to vegetarianism—won't be basically true of the first full year of service, which 20,000 participants will begin in September, working for small, locally based service programs in exchange for living expenses plus $4,725 vouchers to pay for school.

If you care about national service, you ought to be worried about the Clinton act's fine print. There, an ominous passage tells the sad story of the path the administration took. "National service participants," it reads, "may not displace existing workers nor duplicate their functions." The first provision of course makes sense: A regular teacher, cop, or construction worker shouldn't lose his job to a temporary national servant. But the second part is mind-bogglingly stupid: National service workers can't *duplicate existing workers' functions*? That's crazy. One of the major reasons for having national service at all is that there's not enough money for Washington or for local and state governments to hire regular employees to do all the work that needs to be done (the Ford Foundation estimates that there are 3.5 million service-oriented jobs in the country that need filling).

To be sure, CNCS money is underwriting worthwhile projects. In Washington, members of the D.C. Service Corps gave vision tests to elementary school students; out of 7,000 kids tested, 700 needed and got glasses. In New Jersey, Jermaine Puryear teaches Newark's juveniles to put their interest in cars to good use, training former auto thieves to be mechanics. And in Los Angeles County, Erin Ferguson runs a counseling program to keep pregnant teenagers in school, enrolling them, for instance, in prenatal courses instead of gym class. But service corps members can't do orderly work in hospitals, Puryear can't teach vocational ed in a regular high school, and Ferguson can't teach courses. Consider these other cases where Clinton has come up short:

- Throughout the 1992 campaign, Clinton insisted that real teaching—not just aide and tutorial work—would be part of his service plan. Now the plan is law, and real teaching jobs are nowhere to be found. Although Clinton argued at a February 1993 meeting with his aides that a college graduate taking two years to teach school would be making "a real gift to society," the president caved to teachers' unions, which opposed the idea of national service participants taking posts that could be filled by union members. But there is a model out there: Teach For America (TFA), which puts bright college graduates into classrooms as teachers and could be part of the national service corps. While TFA has its problems, the natural thing would be to work out the kinks [see "Class Action," Jonathan Schorr, June 1993]. But as Scott Shuger, who worked on the staff of the Commission on National and Community Service, recently wrote in *The Washington Post*, riling teachers' unions was anathematic to the Clintonites. Shuger quotes Catherine Milton, the commission's executive director, as saying, "I don't want the commission to be identified with a controversial program like Teach For America."

Far better, apparently, to avoid taking a stand against the education establishment and stick to working at the margins. So what will national service do in the schools? "School-Based Service-Learning," which limits corps members to "engag[ing] elementary and secondary students in service-learning projects during or after school, weekends, or summers." What is "service-learning"? It's typified by a Boston program run by a City Year graduate named Brendan O'Brien. Last year,

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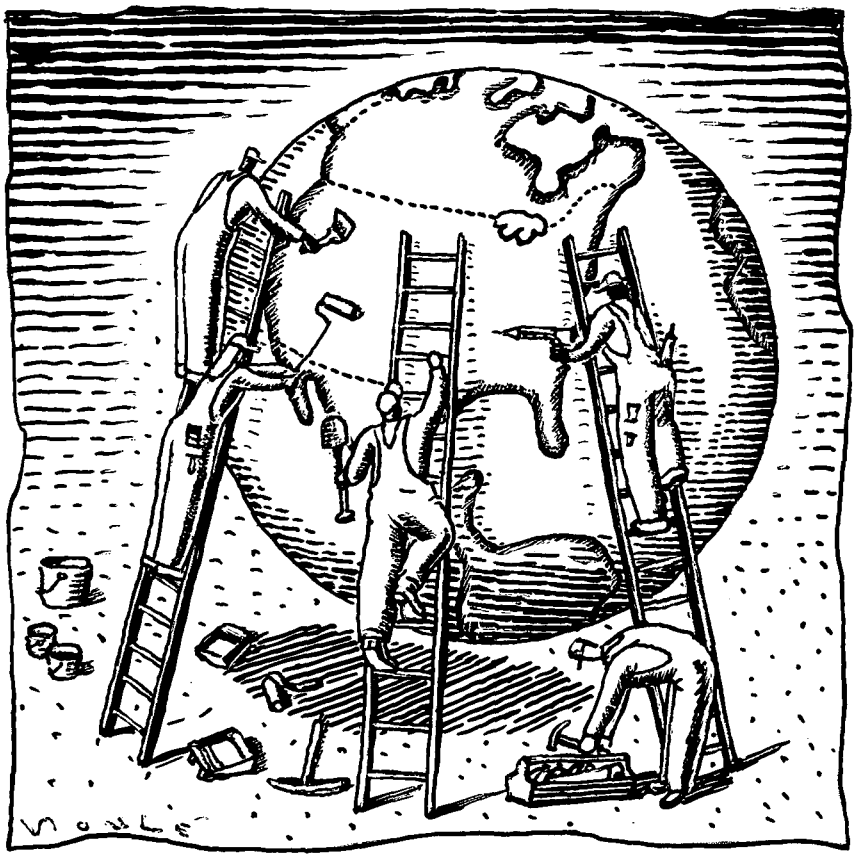
he set up an afterschool environmental "service-learning" program in which he takes schoolkids into the Vermont or New Hampshire woods to teach them eco-friendly habits—like why recycling is important. While this may be worth doing, it hardly seems the best way to spend the lion's share of national service's attention to education, which is what's happening.

➤ This is not to say that real jobs require college degrees. The U.S.'s infrastructure is collapsing, and despite spending $80 billion a year on roads, the federal government and the states now classify fully *one-third* of America's roads as deteriorated. And 39 percent of our bridges are unsafe. We need to fix thousands of them, and miles of bone-jarring, pothole-filled roads, but don't look for national service labor to be put to work doing it. The Davis-Bacon Act, which governs federal hiring on construction projects, makes it prohibitively expensive for a contractor to use a national service participant. Why? Because the contractor is forced under Davis-Bacon to pay the worker what he would pay an experienced labor union member. But nobody in the administration has said a word about exempting national service people from Davis-Bacon, meaning that need, too, will go unmet.



Bob Soulé

Service Aces

To understand the path Clinton should have taken, you have to understand the best features of the two major successful American service antecedents: the thirties' Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Peace Corps, which was founded in the sixties. The CCC, one of the amazing stories of the New Deal, was substantially a work relief program. A favorite of FDR's, who once took a famous drive out to inspect the camps in the Blue Ridge Mountains with Harold Ickes and Henry Wallace, the CCC put 2.5 million unemployed youths to work planting 200 million trees, building trails, raising bridges and firetowers, restoring historic battlefields, clearing beaches, and erecting picnic grounds.

Organized by the military, there was a distinct sense of pride among the CCCers, who sported forest-green uniforms, rose at 6 a.m., and spent the day at work. By late afternoon, they would be back in camp, scrubbing floors and tending gardens. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s account of the experience is telling: "Boys

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from the East Side of New York found themselves in Glacier Park, boys from New Jersey at Mount Hood in Oregon, boys from Texas in Wyoming. . . . They learned trades; more important, they learned about America, and other Americans." One CCC boy put it best: "It helps you to get along with other people in general, because it helps you to get over being selfish."

The Peace Corps, on the other hand, has no relief element to it at all. Founded as a cornerstone of JFK's New Frontier, it drew volunteers with the promise of the opportunity to serve. There was some glamour attached to answering the exciting young president's summons, but once in the fields you did real work, in faraway, dangerous places like Nigeria, Cyprus, and Guatemala, where the possibilities of disease and violence were scary and routine. But the most successful Peace Corps programs gave volunteers serious jobs they did with pride. Teachers, nurses, well-diggers, surveyors, and others fanned out for extended stays. Teaching in a village school in Africa or taking care of the sick in Kuala Lumpur were real, substantive tasks that volunteers enthusiastically executed.

At present, national service workers can't duplicate existing workers' functions. But one of the major reasons for having national service is that there's not enough money for Washington or state governments to hire regular employees to do all that needs doing. The Ford Foundation estimates that there are 3.5 million jobs in the country that could be filled by national service workers.

Clinton is trying to combine the differing objectives of the CCC and the Peace Corps. First, he is taking a page from the CCC by providing money—scholarships—in exchange for service. That means poorer kids are automatically attracted. In the Peace Corps vein, for those people who don't need the money but who want to answer the call, Clinton offers a chance to serve. What Clinton has failed to do, however, is confront the fact that what made the CCC and the Peace Corps work were real jobs. It doesn't matter how people come to a program, whether out of selfish or unselfish motives, or a combination of the two. What matters is that once they are there, serious work awaits.

We will spend $3.4 billion on national service by 1997, enrolling 70,000 participants. This is not inconsiderable: The Peace Corps had only 16,000 volunteers at its peak. And some jobs in the summer pilots are heartening: In Texas, 87 volunteers brought in 100,000 kids for immunizations. Still, much more could—and should—be done: Clinton's opening gambit in the health care war, for instance, was to promise immunizations for all American children. Here's a chance, if service corps members are trained to actually give the shots, to make sure that happens. Clinton deserves generous credit for pushing national service this far; now, he's got to press on. "Here," wrote one Army general of the CCC youths in the thirties, "is much fine human material capable of being brought to the best standards of American manhood. . . We know what proud and happy citizenship could be made of this material, if society were only awake to its responsibility to these boys and to itself."

Clinton, to follow in FDR's footsteps, needs to make national service real. □

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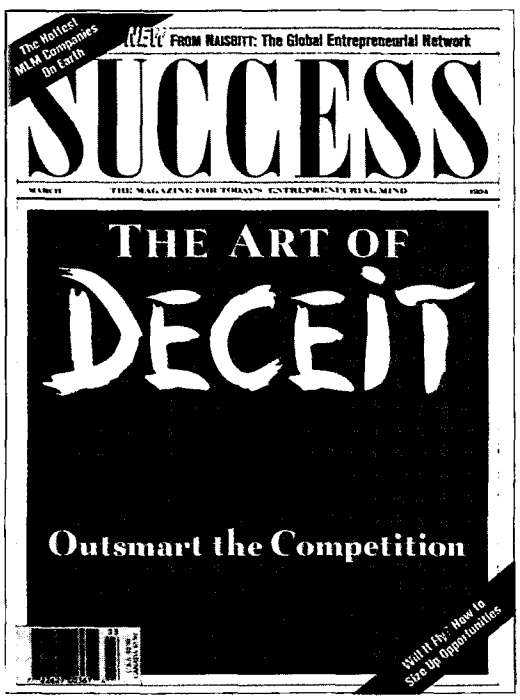
Tidbits & Outrages

AND THE CONTESTANTS' PLASTIC SURGERY WILL BE KNOWN AS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The organizers of the Miss America pageant have announced that starting with this year's winner, Miss America's term of office will officially be referred to not as a "reign" but as a "year of service."

NEXT MONTH: TONYA HARDING ON HOW TO DELEGATE THE DIRTY WORK



FORTUNATELY, THE PILOT HAD ENOUGH CHANGE FOR THE PLANE'S COIN-OPERATED RADAR

According to *Izvestia*, a state-owned electric company that was angry over unpaid bills cut off electrical power to a Russian aviation center while it was controlling dozens of planes in flight–including one carrying Boris Yeltsin.

TOMORROW'S TOPIC: OVER-WEIGHT RADIO HOSTS WHO HAVE NO SELF-AWARENESS

On several broadcasts this past February, Rush Limbaugh made fun of how much Bill Clinton ate during a presidential trip promoting health care reform.

"GODDAMMIT MAX, FIRST WE BLEW WATERGATE, AND NOW THIS!"

The New York Times recently printed the following correction: "Because of a production error, a picture last Sunday of Prince Charles celebrating the 40th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's coronation was printed in mirror image. He carried an umbrella in his right hand."

—Scott Shuger

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Making College Possible

Except for one potentially fatal flaw, Clinton's plan does more to democratize higher education than anything since the GI Bill

BY JONATHAN COHN

One of Bill Clinton's most consistent crowd-pleasers on the 1992 campaign trail was his promise to make college more accessible to young Americans. To his credit, when Clinton got to Washington, he remembered the applause and proposed reforms that were historic in scope. This is the story of that landmark Clinton initiative—and a very damaging compromise the administration made that could potentially wreck it.

"You know and I know," Clinton has told audiences of educators and students, "that there are too many young people who go to college and drop out or defer going to college because they think they can't afford it." It was not ever thus. After World War II, the GI Bill put higher education within reach of millions of working class people who, before the war, had not even dreamed of going to college. Then postwar prosperity and the relatively low cost of college quickly made what was available to veterans available to everyone else. It was possible through the sixties, for example, to pay for tuition, room, and board with a little help from home and a job in the campus cafeteria. But by the seventies, inflation and academic extravagance were driving costs back up, and by the end of the eighties, we were clearly getting back to a situation not unlike the thirties. A recent UCLA national study found the median parental income of incoming college freshmen increased more than twice as fast as the median income of all families with children in the eighties, a clear sign that students from less affluent families were again getting shut out of higher education.

Because costs were going up so fast—tuitions rose at twice the rate of annual inflation in the last decade—the federal college loan program became critically important since students could no longer make it with help from their parents and working around campus. So students had to borrow more and more from banks and other lending institutions. Because students were graduating owing an average $10,000 for an undergraduate education and a staggering $35,000 for graduate degrees, they frequently defaulted, in part because the size of their monthly payments was fixed without regard to their incomes. And for those students (frequently from poor backgrounds) who borrowed to attend shoddy two-year trade and beautician schools that offered dismal job prospects despite grandiose advertising, the default rate reached as high as 50 percent.

Because the government guaranteed repayment, lenders had no incentive to vigorously collect student loans. The result? From 1988 to 1993, the federal government lost $14 billion to student loan defaults—a sum that has clearly given people who say government programs don't work devastating ammunition to shoot down the whole idea of government involvement in making college loans. The sad thing about the default mess is that it discredits Washington's ability to do what the GI Bill did for veterans after the war: Make a university education, and its resulting benefits, possible for millions of people who would otherwise not be able to pay the freight.

And since students in this system came out of school so deeply in hock, they were forced into finding the most lucrative jobs they could. That means a law student who might prefer practicing public-interest law was nevertheless forced into going to work for a better-paying private firm, and a medical student who wanted to become a

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general practitioner was instead forced into a speciality he didn't really want but felt he had to go into for the bigger bucks.

Dollars and Diplomas

Clinton's attack on these problems began early last year when the administration was desperately trying to keep its economic package together. Deep in the package was the college lending reform, and as it wound its way through Congress, interests with stakes in the status quo systematically went after it. The lobbies, as one frustrated Senate staffer put it, "wedged a huge foot in the door."

Let's start with the banks and loan middlemen. To prevent the government from cutting them out of the lucrative student market altogether (student loans are the third most profitable kind of debt for lenders, behind only industrial loans and credit cards), banks and the Student Marketing Lending Association (Sallie Mae) swung into action. In hearing testimony, they darkly warned of the potential waste if the government were to take over the entire program. But Sallie Mae—which packages and sells bundles of loans to lenders, acting essentially as a private corporation—and its banker allies did not mention that under the existing system, fees consume 8 percent of a total loan (Clinton's reform caps fees at 4 percent).

Meanwhile, there's already enough waste in the *private* student loan business to keep publicity-seeking congressmen happy for years. Banks like Citicorp and Chase made more than $1 billion off student lending in 1992. (To the banks, defaults are unimportant; they just mean the banks get their money sooner rather than later.) Populist pressure could have been brought to bear on the fact that Sallie Mae paid its president more than $2 million in 1991, and the fifth man on the Sallie Mae totem pole earns twice what Bill Clinton earns as president of the United States. Nevertheless, under last year's imperative to find any savings in the budget anywhere, the interests' testimony helped convince Congress to preserve a private market for 40 percent of the loans.

Which is not in itself bad: To compete, private lenders will have to offer good service, because students will have the option of borrowing from the government. But students should be able to take advantage of private capital as long as the government regulates the interest and fees banks charge students. Clinton got 60 percent of the market for direct lending, cut the fees, and won lower interest rates. Everybody wins: The banks make interest they would not earn under a complete government lending program and students have access to more loans.

The problem is, without a reliable *collection* mechanism to catch deadbeats, there will be more of the waste that has subjected the programs to ridicule in the past. Clinton supported a brilliant solution to that problem: Put the Internal Revenue Service in charge of collecting loans, which it could do as it processes tax returns. Using the IRS would radically reduce the staggeringly expensive defaults by centralizing collections, saving money that could then be funnelled back to students. Yet this is the critical reform which was rubbed out of the bill at the last minute.

As winter gave way to spring in 1993, IRS involvement fell prey to students' lobbies, the IRS itself, congressional committees, and the Department of Education. No sooner had Clinton made his proposal in January than the United States Students Association (USSA), an influential group and potential Clinton ally, shrieked as if the sky were falling. "We don't think of the IRS as a student-friendly organization," huffed Pronita Gupta, USSA's legislative director. "Their mentality is 'collect first, ask questions later,' and we didn't see that as particularly helpful." Helpful to deadbeats, no, but the student group's opposition powerfully dramatizes one of the IRS's great strengths: It *will* deliver on collections as long as a borrower files a tax return—and virtually everybody does that.

Students who default because they don't have the money needn't worry about IRS persecution: The income-contingent option protects them. (And with Education cracking down on two-year schools which don't provide students with decent educations, far fewer students will have reason to resent paying back loans in the first place.) The IRS would just be tracking down those students who can pay but are *choosing* not to. Already, an agreement to have the IRS garnish defaulters' tax refunds has brought in $2 billion over three years.

Despite the idea's intrinsic good sense, the IRS was—in fact, still is—reluctant to take on collections, thinking it would mean a blizzard of more work. But it wouldn't. "There's already a space on

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the 1040 for 'extra taxes,' and those who owed payments would fill out a line on W-4 for additional withholding," says Joel Flader, a congressional aide who has studied the issue for years. IRS income data would make calculations much easier; its clout would make defaults much rarer.

Nevertheless, IRS bureaucrats conveyed their resistance to friendly staffers on the House Ways and Means Committee. The Ways and Means staff was sympathetic, because it in turn wanted to keep *its* power over the IRS instead of ceding oversight control to the House Education and Labor Committee, which oversees the entire direct lending program.

Ways and Means' decision to protect its turf should have set off Clinton's alarm bells. But the arm of the administration in the best position to fight for the IRS collections—the Department of Education—also wanted to hold on to *its* authority to oversee collections. "The Education people saw a piece of their action slipping away, so they jumped up and said all this needed 'further study'," says a Democratic congressional staffer. In late July, the conference committee on the president's economic bill jettisoned the IRS provision. In its place, the committee authorized "further study," with a report due back from an IRS/Education team in six months. (That would have made it due around February 1994; now, the administration has put it off until June while insiders say the IRS makes a case that it's too complicated, and Education nods in agreement.) Meanwhile, Education is contracting out collections or doing the job itself.

What's so bad about that? After all, even without the IRS, the feds doing 60 percent of the lending—which is the current plan—should save more than $4 billion by 1998. (In effect, Education will act as a bank, lending money directly to students.) What's so troubling is there are still billions more to be had if the default rate can be cut—the task for which the IRS is especially suited and Education is uniquely *un*suited.

The General Accounting Office, for example, has repeatedly criticized Education for loan mismanagement. Education lost 33 percent of its personnel during the Reagan and Bush administrations, and the ones who are left have made a mess of many of the programs they are charged with overseeing. "The department has always been a thinly staffed, low-prestige agency with suspect administrative skills," says one veteran higher education lobbyist. In other words, these are the last people we want administering billions in loan collections. After all, these are the bureaucrats who, to take just one example from a February *New York Times* series on Education's mismanagement, failed to notice that Anthony Russell, a University of Miami athletic administrator, falsified $220,000 in grant applications to finance his crack habit. Even David Longanecker, the assistant secretary for post-secondary education, acknowledges that the department does not expect the default rate to decline significantly unless the IRS takes over.

But until Clinton gets his administration in order and fights off the wealthy private interests, that's the system we're stuck with. And that is especially sad considering how far he has already come. Saving money from the program—IRS collection could bring in an additional $1 billion a year—frees up money for grants, lower interest rates, and lower fees. The IRS may have its problems, but at least it's in the business of collecting money full-time.

Any long-term solution to the high cost of higher education involves keeping tuition down. One answer may be to have a federal agency report on the number of undergraduate hours taught by full-time faculty and publish itemized accountings of how much of each university's dollar goes to administration. That way, if universities aren't interested in economy just to do the right thing, at least there would be the threat of having potential consumers knowing where the money goes.

This is a case where the country has a problem (inefficient student lending), a solution (what has already passed, except for the IRS provision), and a president who understands both. The next time Clinton brings the subject up, he should tell both his own Education Department and his IRS to give up their opposition to *his own initiative*. What's at stake is nothing less than the government's credibility to run a program that has a direct, tangible social benefit—making college available to more people by saving money on loans, and enabling borrowers to do useful but low-paying work without fear of defaulting. But without the IRS around to catch the deadbeats, Washington's credibility will also be stuck in hock. □

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Making Work Pay

Perhaps his administration's greatest achievement to date, Clinton's expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit will lift millions of Americans out of poverty

BY PRESTON LERNER

The Earned Income Tax Credit is the Sara Lee of the federal tax code: Nobody doesn't like it—Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives, neos, paleos, you name it. Described as a "work bonus" when it was instituted in 1975, the EITC is supposed to guarantee that Americans who work for a living don't have to raise their children in poverty. What's not to like?

In a perfect world, of course, we wouldn't need the Earned Income Tax Credit. Unfortunately, 5.5 million Americans live in households dangling below the poverty line even though the head of the household works full-time. Consider, for example, the plight of the minimum-wage slave. Even with the maximum food-stamp entitlement of $3,200 on top of an annual salary of $8,840, a family of four remains nearly $3,000 shy of the poverty threshold. Which is where the EITC is supposed to ride to the rescue.

In his presidential campaign, Bill Clinton vowed to "raise the Earned Income Tax Credit to make up the difference between a family's earnings and the poverty level." Now, the press isn't in the habit of applauding politicians for the promises they keep, but on the EITC, Clinton deserves praise. Although the plan approved by Congress in August wasn't as ambitious as the one the president had been pushing, it still injects an additional $20.8 billion into the program over the next five years. By 1996, when the expansion is fully phased in, an estimated $23 billion in EITC payments will be dispersed annually, making the program even more expensive than Aid To Families with Dependent Children.

Besides providing more generous benefits, the new EITC also expands the scope of the program to embrace an estimated 20.6 million taxpayers, up from 14.5 million in 1993. And while it doesn't completely bridge the gap between the minimum wage and the poverty line, it significantly narrows the margin. "We are incrementally attempting as a society to move beyond welfare to the subsidization of work, and I think that's good," says Gene Steuerle, a senior

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fellow at the Urban Institute. "But government programs come with trade-offs—administrative and enforcement costs—and this is no exception."

Although he generally supports the new and improved EITC, Steuerle has plenty of reservations about who the EITC helps, how much it helps them, and why it's such a ripe target for fraud. And like professional bakers confronted with a Sara Lee cheesecake, he, like many other economists, thinks he's got a better recipe.

Bob Soulé

But first, a few words from the IRS. Starting in 1996, when the new rate structure takes effect, taxpayers with two or more children will qualify for up to $3,370 as long as their income is between $8,425 and $11,000. Filers with one child and earnings between $6,000 and $11,000 may be eligible for as much as $2,040. The benefits phase out completely at $27,000 (for a two-child family) and $23,760 (for one child). Also, starting next year, childless workers aged 25 through 64 will for the first time be entitled to a much more modest EITC windfall if they earn less than $9,000.

Even this skeletal review undermines that favorite fulmination of the program's critics—that it discourages people from working. On the contrary, you can't qualify for the credit without working. This doesn't mean that the EITC is a cure for welfare. It isn't. And sure, at higher income levels, corner-cutters who pore over the tax tables may find that they can do slightly better by taking a higher tax credit rather than working a few extra hours a week. But the cure—a more gradual phase-out rate—is worse than the sickness: It will cause program costs to skyrocket, and it won't put a single extra penny into the pockets of the truly needy.

What about the flaws cited by other critics? Some, it turns out, are a bit vexing, others are not.

• ***The credit is underused:*** This one's gotten so much play that it's ceased to have much shock value—or to be entirely true. In fact, thanks to various public-education efforts, at least 75 percent and as many as 90 percent of all eligible taxpayers already receive the EITC. Still, millions of Americans trapped on the low-skills, low-wages treadmill are missing out on a benefit they ought to be getting. "None of the women here knew about it," says Sandra Villalobos, who runs a 110-unit housing project for low-income single mothers in Los Angeles. "I didn't know about it myself." Groups that ought to be targeted by future outreach programs include immigrants who don't speak English and others who don't pay income tax, but who still qualify for the EITC.

• ***The tax form is too complicated:*** "It's impenetrable," says Bob McIntyre, director of Citizens for Tax Justice. "I can do it, but I use a computer. That's probably why it has such a high error rate." Mind you, no short forms for EITC filers. Instead, they've got to fill out ei-

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ther a 1040 or 1040A and a Schedule EIC. And that's only after plowing through the Earned Income Credit workbook in all 36 pages of its mind-numbing glory.

To be sure, the wordsmiths at the IRS have never been on anybody's short-list of Pulitzer candidates. Still, Congress deserves a lot of the blame for saddling the EITC with well-meaning but perplexing bonuses. In 1990, for example, legislators whipped up extra credits for health-insurance premiums and new-born babies. This year, those ill-conceived add-ons were sensibly sacrificed on the altar of streamlining. But the IRS has balked at the General Accounting Office's suggestion that it junk the Schedule EIC and allow taxpayers to file for the credit through the 1040 or 1040A. As it is, nearly one-third of all EITC filings contain errors, and IRS officials contend—reasonably—that the number would be even higher without the Schedule EIC.

• ***It exacts a perverse marriage penalty***: True. Take a set of parents with two children. Each adult makes $14,000. As a couple, they earn too much to qualify for the EITC (based on the 1996 tax tables). But filing separately, each claiming one child, they're entitled to roughly $3,100. You think that's an anomaly? Okay, say Mom and Dad are flipping burgers for minimum wage. Filing together, they receive about $2,000. Filing separately, their windfall is closer to $4,100.

What gives? According to Robert Greenstein, executive director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Even though the EITC increases the marriage penalty for people at higher income levels, it greatly reduces it for a welfare mother with a live-in boyfriend who earns $10,000. The question is, which group are you more concerned about? I'm more concerned about the behavioral effect on the families at the bottom."

• ***It's a beacon for fraud***: If you didn't work last year, you obviously can't qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. But if you claim to have earned $8,000 as, say, a freelance writer, you're eligible for an EITC bonanza even if you didn't sell a single story. Although nobody knows exactly how widespread the problem is, Steuerle's already coined a phrase—the superterranean economy—to describe it. His simple but excessively draconian solution is to declare self-employed workers ineligible for the EITC.

Jonathan Barry Forman, a tax law professor at the University of Oklahoma, has a kinder, gentler idea. The way things work now, Social Security taxes are withheld from paychecks and then returned in the form of the EITC—robbing Peter to pay Peter. Forman suggests that all taxpayers, regardless of income, ought to receive a Social Security tax exemption on the first $5,000 or $10,000 of earnings. "This would also solve the Nannygate problem for most people," he says. Unfortunately, overhauling the Social Security system would probably generate as much support as renominating Zoë Baird. A simpler idea would be to make self-employed EITC filers sign a document swearing to the truthfulness of their returns—with the penalties for fraud in bold print across the top of the form—then have the IRS audit enough returns, smartly and with sufficient publicity, to keep everyone honest.

• ***It's too little too late***: Actually, an advance-payment mechanism—a W-5 form—already exists. The reason that less than one-half of 1 percent of all EITC beneficiaries use it is many Americans have a sweet tooth for year-end tax-refund candy. "I don't want it a little bit at a time," says Nancy Martinez, who could afford to drop off the AFDC rolls and get a job only because of the EITC windfall she receives. "To me, [the lump-sum refund] is something I can use to catch up on bills." The IRS hopes to enlist more W-5 converts through a new program that allows taxpayers to take some of their benefits in their paychecks and still receive a year-end refund.

There are other niggling problems with the EITC. For example, no provisions are made for families with more than two children. And because eligibility is based on annual income rather than hourly wages, a high-dollar consultant working part-time can qualify. But the harder you scrutinize the potential solutions, the better the Earned Income Tax Credit looks. To paraphrase Churchill on democracy, it's the worst anti-poverty measure around—except for all the others. □

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The Great Whitewater Snipe Hunt

Reporters covering the story like to portray Arkansas as a podunk swamp filled with hillbillies and nitwits. But if the journalists are so much smarter, why can't they get their facts straight?

BY GENE LYONS

These Arkansas lunkheads couldn't come up to Shakespeare. What they wanted was low comedy—and maybe something ruther worse than low comedy.

—Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

The Arkansas that Whitewater special prosecutor Robert B. Fiske, Jr. has jumped into—opening a Little Rock office and hiring a team of seven lawyers—has changed a great deal since Mark Twain was writing about it back in 1882, but it hasn't lost its zeal for low-grade political buffoonery. Almost everywhere except for a few square miles of Little Rock surrounding the Capital Hotel bar where out-of-town reporters drink, the conflict between Sunday-go-to-meeting prudery and honky-tonk raunchiness that typified frontier America continues unabated.

Given literacy levels among the lowest in the United States, this adds up to a populist brand of political warfare at about the level of professional wrestling. In a small, largely rural state with one real city, it also makes for fantastic—and highly entertaining—gossip. Almost everybody, it seems, has a neighbor whose second cousin knows an old boy who worked on the governor's dentist's car, and *he* says. . .

During the 1990 Arkansas gubernatorial primaries, for example, tales were widely circulated about three of the four serious candidates—the two Republicans, and, of course, Bill Clinton. Only Clinton's Democratic opponent escaped suspicion. There was talk of whores, drunken orgies at duck hunting clubs, illegitimate children, abortions, hush money, even suicides. One prominent Arkansas politician was rumored to have had carnal knowledge of a convicted murderess inside her jail cell. In fact, it's hard to think of an Arkansas politician about whom scurrilous rumors *haven't* circulated. For most folks, evaluating this avalanche of smut is simple: Your candidate is innocent, his or her opponents are guilty.

Even so, it would have made a buzzard gag, as Huck Finn might put it, to witness the press' role in publicizing Clinton-hater Cliff Jackson's production of Troopergate last winter. It has become customary in

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advanced circles to badmouth David Brock and *The American Spectator* for "trivializing the professional efforts of the *Los Angeles Times* and CNN," as Frank Rich put it in *The New York Times*.

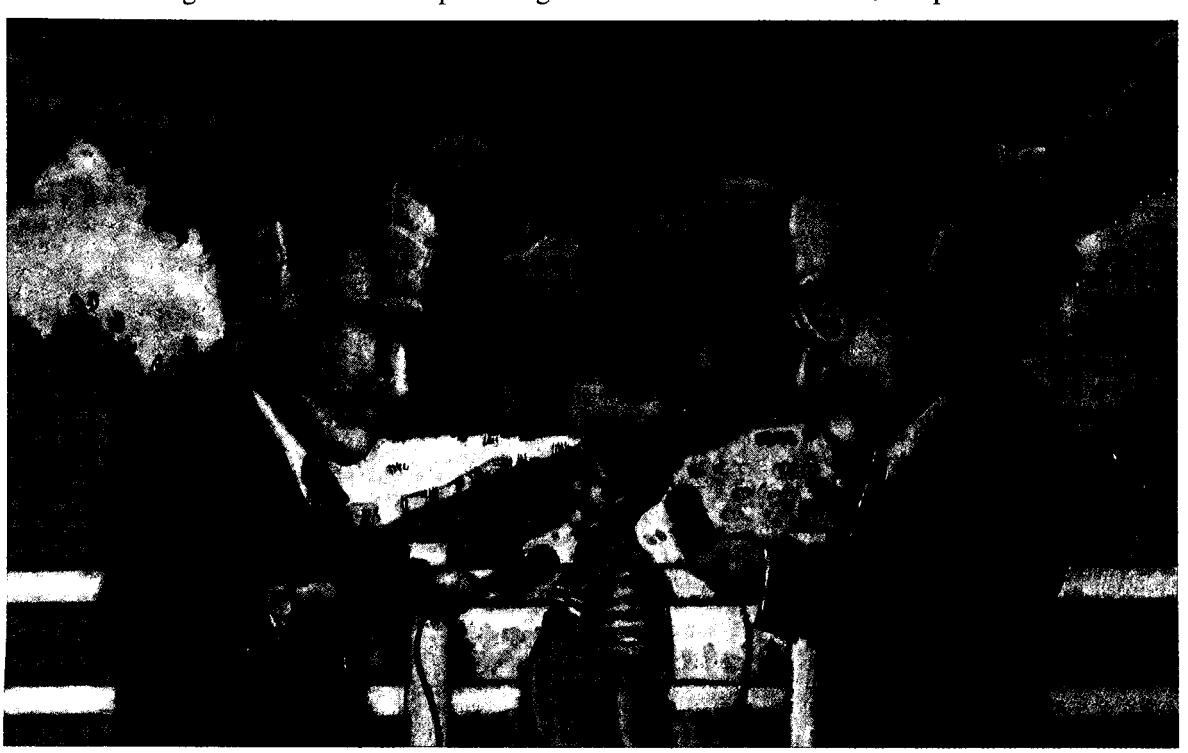
But at least the *Spectator* version gave us the whole carcass—hide, hair, and hoofs—instead of the more sanitized versions that appeared elsewhere. As such, it's indispensable to the connoisseur of Arkansas political mischief. Making small pretense of objectivity, Brock passes on every accusation troopers Larry Patterson and Roger Perry could dream up. Even the troopers' inability to affix a single date and time to any of the president's alleged indiscretions—thus making it impossible for him to defend himself, as any rookie cop would understand—failed to faze the national reporters.

It took the Little Rock bureau of the Associated Press, by contrast, about 24 hours to learn that in 1990 Patterson and Perry had wrapped a patrol car around a tree while drunk, allegedly lied to their superiors, then swore to a completely different version for personal gain in a civil lawsuit. Next it turned out that visitors' logs which the two troopers alleged Hillary ordered destroyed—ostensibly to hide Gennifer Flowers' visits—never in fact existed.

No sooner had the trooper farce played itself out than the TV talk-show pundits regretted its tawdriness but predicted that Whitewater would really bring the president woe. Republicans smelled blood, somebody tacked on the dreaded "-gate" suffix, and business was soon booming again at the Capital Hotel bar.

Poor Arkansas. Long rankled by its hillbilly caricature, many Arkansans had dared hope the Clinton presidency would change things. But then here come reporters from places like New Jersey, New York, and Maryland—those paragons of clean government—to portray the whole state as a kind of ethical Dogpatch.

On what evidence? Well, 15 years ago the Clintons went into a real estate deal with a man who later bought an S&L, succumbed to manic-depressive illness, and ran it into the ground. In the process, the Whitewater land development deal went belly-up. And maybe S&L operator Jim McDougal illegally funneled $15,000 into Clinton's 1984 campaign fund. He certainly had the motive and the opportunity, as the cops say. So far nobody's shown what an *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* sportswriter once called



James Kowalski

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"a chinchilla of evidence" that the deed was done, much less that the Clintons knew about it.

To be sure, the White House handling of Whitewater has done much to invite trouble. Hillary Clinton should never have represented Madison before Arkansas regulators appointed by her husband, and critics who see it as symptomatic of a kind of moral arrogance are probably right. Of course, much of the trouble the Clintons are now experiencing—including charges of cronyism among the Rose Law Firm alumni who populate the administration—would have been avoided if Hillary had long ago decided not to practice the well-heeled corporate law that allowed her cachet to be used by Rose to attract business with the implication of access to the governor. And in Washington, the appearance of a Whitewater coverup—including removing files from Vincent Foster's office on the night of his suicide and the meetings between White House aides and Roger Altman, then the acting head of the Resolution Trust Corporation—was dumb, guaranteeing weeks of hostile coverage.

But just about the last thing that strikes the national press is the first thing that strikes the majority of Arkansans. To wit, how unlikely it seems that Bill and Hillary Clinton—the depths of whose mutual political ambition can scarcely be fathomed by ordinary mortals—would go in the tank for so little money. Whatever their character flaws, nothing known about either Clinton indicates they'd break the law for money, even conceding Hillary's apparent self-pity about Clinton's small gubernatorial salary and her clear desire—remember she chose to work for the lucrative Rose firm—to make a higher salary herself. That Clinton served six terms as Arkansas governor untouched by financial scandal seems to count for nothing. After all, what do we know?

Much Ado

Well, one thing some of us know is that Whitewater is old news to local journalists and voters. Clinton's Republican opponent, Sheffield Nelson, raised the issue during the 1990 gubernatorial campaign. A year later, McDougal himself was tried by a Reagan-appointed prosecutor and acquitted of bank fraud in a Little Rock federal court with much attendant publicity.

Until 1991, Little Rock had two statewide daily newspapers; a nasty, protracted circulation war spanned almost all of Clinton's time in public office. In the process, very few stones were left unturned. Clinton's political destruction, after all, has been the winning *Democrat-Gazette*'s main agenda for about 15 years. Even minor financial corruption brings public wrath. During the newspaper war many scalps were taken, among them Attorney General Steve Clark's, a Clinton ally. Caught by the press padding his expense account for expensive dinner dates, Clark was tried, convicted, sentenced, and eventually sued for repayment.

So if there had been a Whitewater scandal, chances are the Little Rock papers would have found it long ago. Of course, it is always possible there is a smoking gun in the documents Fiske has subpoenaed, but most veteran journalists here think that when all is said and done, Whitewatergate will turn out to be a giant snipe hunt—a waste of time and energy. Nevertheless, the press loves a scandal, and just about every factual and logical error in the national press has run in a prosecutorial direction. A few telling examples:

- Although reports in March indicated the Clintons may owe more taxes on Whitewater than they have already paid, *earlier* this year, Whitewater stories centered on why, if the Clintons lost $69,000, they didn't *deduct* enough from their taxes. "This may be the first time," writes Joel Achenbach in *The Washington Post*, "that a politician's decision not to take a tax write-off is perceived as suspicious." But the Clintons did deduct a good deal of their Whitewater investment, according to a story by Bill Simmons of the Little Rock AP. Simmons took out the couple's tax returns from 1980 to 1990, checked the itemized deductions, and there it was: $41,000 interest on Whitewater loan payments over several years. Why the Clintons didn't write off the entire $69,000—the sum which Hillary, at least until mid-March, maintained they lost in the deal—is unclear. But the $41,000 was there for any diligent reporter to find. (Of course, now that the potential scandal is that the Clintons may have written off too much and not too little, the press may leap on Simmons' story as evidence of the Clintons' duplicity—even though the charge was completely different just two months ago.)
- Then there's the David Hale connection. Indicted for bank fraud in another case, Hale, "a Clinton-appointed judge," as *Time* and *The Washington Times* have archly referred to him, tried to cop a plea by alleging that in 1986 Clinton pressured him to lend $300,000 to McDougal's then-wife, Susan. Federal prosecutors turned him down, and the White House says he invented the story. The coincidence that investigators searched Hale's Little Rock

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office on the same day Vince Foster killed himself has conspiracy theorists all worked up.

Omitted from the national conventional wisdom about Hale is almost everything locally significant. Hale was never a Clinton intimate, but a lowly municipal court judge (misdemeanors and preliminary hearings only). Although a lifelong Democrat, Hale was actually appointed in 1981 by then-Republican Governor Frank White. Since then, like all Arkansas judges, Hale has been elected. With a reputation for political opportunism, Hale's indictment practically inspired a celebration among local criminal defense lawyers. The excuse that Bill Clinton made him do it provoked general hilarity.

● Coverage in the newsmagazines has been particularly incoherent, with weekly reminders of the story's forbidding complexity—as if reporters who can explicate Balkan ethnic conflicts find themselves stymied by a $230,000 real estate scam in the Ozarks.

The entire hook for a recent *Time* piece, for example, turned on the supposed mystery of how 230 acres of Whitewater land could escalate in value from $440 to $1,087 in a single year. The answer, as folks say in real estate, is location, location, location. Unlike the roadless Ozark forest land that made up most of the original 3,600-acre tract surrounding Whitewater, the Clinton acreage has about a half mile frontage on the White River—arguably the prime trout fishing stream in the lower 48 states. It also fronts the only access road on the west side of the river between Crooked Creek and the Buffalo River, a distance of 30-odd river miles, most of it either National Forest or National Park land. It is paralyzingly beautiful.

● Probably the most telling error in the coverage devoted to Whitewater concerns Hillary Rodham Clinton's dealings with Arkansas securities commissioner Beverly Bassett Schaffer. According to *The New York Times*, Schaffer—a striking woman whom an NBC-TV crew ambushed outside her Fayetteville office evidently in the hope of linking Troopergate and Whitewatergate in viewers' minds—was S&L mogul McDougal's personal choice for the job.

Not so, Schaffer told the weekly *Arkansas Times*. In fact, Schaffer says she's never met McDougal or his wife, never talked to them on the phone, and never heard Bill Clinton mention their names. She's told this to *New York Times* reporters over and over again, she insists, and can't imagine why they take McDougal's word over hers.

➤The universally accepted story that Hillary Rodham Clinton petitioned Schaffer to approve a preferred stock offering that would have allowed Madison to shore up its equity reserves, and that Schaffer did so, turns out to be false. The whole idea was the Dallas-based, Republican-administered Federal Home Loan Bank Board's to begin with. But what happened was that in 1985, Hillary wrote a brief asserting that the stock scheme was permissible under Arkansas law.

Schaffer then sent Hillary a memo agreeing that yes, in the abstract, the putative scheme was legal. And in fact, it was legal—or would have been had Madison Guaranty ever actually applied. But doubtless aware that it couldn't satisfy disclosure requirements, the S&L never did. So here's how it came out in a recent, typically garbled piece in *The Washington Post*: "State regulators told Madison officials it was legal to sell preferred stock and to market limited partnerships in shaky real estate projects, plans that eventually fell through." Question: Did Schaffer stipulate only "shaky real estate projects"? Or would sound investments have been allowed, too?

"It turns history on its head to suggest, as the reporters and the Republican critics do," writes longtime Arkansas political reporter Ernest Dumas in the *Arkansas Times*, "that regulators in the Reagan administration in the mid-80s were trying to shut down an insolvent S&L run by a rogue operator while the government of Bill Clinton connived to keep it afloat." Within a year of her now-famous "Dear Hillary" memo, Dumas shows, Schaffer gave Madison's board "a virtual ultimatum to remove McDougal, which it did. With a Peat Marwick audit showing the company insolvent in December 1987, Schaffer immediately asked the FHLB to take it over... It took the FHLB another 14 months to do so."

In the interim, of course, came the 1988 elections—which virtually all those in Congress, the Reagan administration, and the Bush campaign wished to see completed before the magnitude of the S&L crisis became evident to voters.

As it tends to do under attack, the Clinton administration has made a hash of Whitewater, drawing itself up in horror when it ought to be fighting back, changing tactics and altering its story almost daily, and generally doing all it can to invite the suspicion it so resents. But the smart money here in Little Rock says hold your bets. When all's said and done, Whitewatergate will likely peter out like previous Arkansas-based smears, and the national press will all turn simultaneously, like a school of fish, to the next damned thing. □

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Memo of the Month

SBA Information Notice

TO: All SBA Employees **CONTROL NO.:** 0000-952

SUBJECT: SBA NEWSFLASH 94-2 **EFFECTIVE:** 2/22/94

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE:

This week the Administrator is scheduled to testify before Congress on issues relating to the FY 1995 budget.

By now all field offices should have received the Administrator's official photograph. Contrary to the policy previously in effect, displaying the photograph in each office is optional, and at the discretion of the Office Manager.

ADMINISTRATOR'S INITIATIVES:

HEALTH CARE: If you remember in October, 1993, the Central Office sent all District Offices the results of a survey of 30 or so firms, on the effects of the Health Security Act on small businesses. We would like to ask that those results not be used in the future. Next week, the Office of Public Communications will send field offices a set of small business talking points, questions and answers, and a one page fact sheet regarding health care reform.

SBA Form 1353.3 (12-93) PerForm Version; Use 4-93 Edition Until Exhausted
Must be accompanied by SBA Form 58

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Create a Civil Service That is Accountable and Skilled

BY JAMES BENNET

After 20 years in office, Coleman Young announced last year that he would not run again for mayor of Detroit, where almost one in three people lives in poverty and the true unemployment rate is anybody's guess. The voters pointedly did not replace him with his anointed successor.

Instead, they elected Dennis Archer, a former Michigan Supreme Court justice who promised to revive the city's bureaucracy. "I represent the people who can't get their garbage picked up on time, their streetlights to stay on all night, their phone calls answered at City Hall," he said.

Archer spent the weeks before his inauguration painstakingly picking a new team interested in "opening the windows and letting fresh air into City Hall." After all, if he hoped to energize the city government, he couldn't waste a single appointment.

You see, out of the city's 16,023 employees, Archer was permitted to replace exactly 150.

Archer's predicament is hardly unique. In New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, taking over a government not known for its nimbleness, was allowed to appoint 1,200 people. Out of more than 216,000 city employees.

This is nuts. Mayors with good ideas need to be able to hire people committed to and accountable for enacting them. Mayors—and governors and presidents—with bad ideas need to be deprived of the excuse that unappointed civil servants are undercutting their efforts.

Turning a large portion of civil service positions into appointed ones remains perhaps the only lunatic-fringe *Monthly* reform, one that policy types still nervously edge away from. This is in part because the abuses of the old patronage systems were so spectacular. Among my personal favorites were the lifeguards of Coney Island in the thirties, documented by Robert Caro: Some were grossly overweight, some spent their days fishing from the lifesaving dories, and some were afraid to go near the water because they couldn't swim.

Reformers could prevent such abuses without dumping patronage altogether, however. Insist that latter-day patronage appointees pass civil service tests: The lifeguards should know how to swim and the accountants to add.

There is probably a deeper reason that people start fidgeting when you praise patronage. At about the same time revulsion was rising against Tammany Hall, reformers were pushing for the creation of certified professions in the private sector. A licensing process was created for doctors, for example, to ensure competence and honesty. That same desire to create a neutral class of expert servants spilled over into government

James Bennet, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1989 to 1991, is the Detroit bureau chief of* The New York Times.

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reform, encouraged by the growing conviction—particularly among the educated elite that captained the government reform movement—that anything associated with "politics" was dirty.

Unfortunately, the analogy was flawed. Unlike most civil servants, doctors in private practice do not have monopolies on the services they provide and need, for the most part, to supply good care to attract and retain patients (and avoid lawsuits). In other words, while certification helped weed out incompetent doctors, it did not entirely insulate the suitable ones from public influence. Nevertheless, the impulse to create and insulate civil service solons has persisted, fanned by journalists and academics with a bias for neutrality and tenure.

Isolating public workers from public influence has turned out to be a colossal mistake. But the irony of the system—candidates forever running against unaccountable bureaucrats—is that it only deepens respectable repugnance for politics, making the possibility of real change more remote.

Matt Brownson

Ask yourself: If the size of the public workforce is limited and competence required, why is there anything corrupt or dishonorable about trading a vote for decent services, or even a vote or campaign work for a job? Further, in an era of computerized payrolls, scandal-hungry local TV news reporters, and tightening disclosure rules, it would be no easier for political machines to buy votes with dollars or to stuff ballot boxes in a spoils system than it is now.

Civil services have not eliminated, but merely revised, many of the old abuses. In New York—as in other cities, states, and the federal system—you still have to know someone to get a government job, because figuring out what jobs are available and how to apply is so hard without the guidance of an insider.

While many bureaucrats are hard-working, well-meaning people, the system seems inevitably to encourage them to focus on procedures rather than results. When I was covering city government in New York, shelter workers would call to rage, using jargon it took quite a while to penetrate, about the manipulation of civil service rules by the social services' administrator. None called about her homeless policies.

And many bureaucrats are not so well-meaning. One of the first signs in Detroit that Young would not run again was the whispering last spring among city employees that his appointees were seeking to burrow into tenured civil service positions. □

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Disenfranchise Poor *and* Rich Welfare Recipients

BY TOM BETHELL

In his book *On Representative Government*, published in 1861, John Stuart Mill said he regarded it "as required by first principles, that the receipt of parish relief should be a peremptory disqualification for the franchise." By "parish relief" he meant what we call welfare. Those who receive welfare should not be allowed to vote, in other words. If I could wave a wand, that is the reform I would now enact.

On what grounds? Mill continued his argument as follows:

> He who cannot by his labor suffice for his own support has no claim to the privilege of helping himself to the money of others. By becoming dependent on the remaining members of the community for actual subsistence, he abdicates his claim to equal rights with them in other respects.

Recall that Mill was the great progressive of his day. In this same chapter of *Representative Government* he made a powerful case that the franchise should be extended to women. Yet I doubt if there is a politician in the Western world reactionary enough to embrace Mill's position on welfare recipients. This shows as well as anything just how much the terms of political discourse have moved to the left in the last 130 years. And they continue to do so. What would Mill have made of the Motor Voter bill, recently signed into law? One of its provisions enables those applying for welfare, or receiving it, to register to vote while at the welfare office.

Today there is much talk of "ending welfare as we know it." No doubt Bill Clinton would like to deliver on his campaign promise. But without Mill's reform (which is not going to happen, of course), real reform is not in the cards. We may get tinkering at the edges—perhaps enough to allow Clinton to claim some kind of victory. More money will be made available for training programs—that kind of thing.

How many recall that in 1988 welfare was overhauled along just these lines? "Work requirements" were added with Reagan's blessing. It was such a big deal at the time that when the legislation seemed stymied for a few days, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned that "we will have spoiled the next century" if the impasse persisted. It passed, and by 1990 it was apparent that the welfare system had been subtly expanded, in ways few (certainly not Reagan) understood at the time.

Here's another prediction, lifted from Charles Murray's playbook: Without real reform of the welfare system, high rates of illegitimacy will persist and the war zones that are our inner cities will become more dangerous than ever.

The problem is that our system of universal, equal-weighted suffrage gives too much political clout to the recipient classes. This criticism applies just as much to farmers who receive crop subsidies and to ranchers who graze cattle at minimal expense on federal lands as to those on welfare. Recipients of middle class "entitlements" should also be removed from the voter-registration rolls, then. The message would be clear and even-handed: either you vote, or you get federal subsidies, but not both.

Denying the vote to an ever-widening set of recipients would probably make such a reform even more difficult to enact. The farmers and the ranchers would get together with the social workers and the welfare rights people, and to-

Tom Bethell, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1975 to 1976, is Washington correspondent for* The American Spectator *and the author of* The Electric Windmill (1988).

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gether they would constitute such a powerful bloc that they would not only preserve their voting rights but no doubt end up getting their various subsidies increased.

Recently the word "gridlock" has been bandied about, referring in simplistic fashion to the difficulty of passing new laws. But the real legislative gridlock arises because a tax-payer and a tax-recipient have equal weight on election day. The result is that it is extremely difficult to alter the structure of the income redistribution—other than by adding to it at the margin.

The gridlock is now conspicuous in Western Europe, where the welfare state is more extensive than it is in the U.S. Recipients have so much clout that, no matter who is voted in or out of office, benefits remain sacrosanct. Politicians promise change, but when they get into office they are confronted by this terrifyingly powerful voting bloc: The recipient classes! Little or nothing is changed. Gridlock.

There is still room for maneuver in the United States, and the crisis here may be somewhat longer delayed. But the middle-class retreat into guarded suburban enclaves will continue if radical reform is not enacted. Such reform is unlikely as long as tax recipients can "help themselves to the money of others." □

Reinvent the CIA

BY DAVID IGNATIUS

The Central Intelligence Agency's current cryptonym for itself in classified message traffic is PNINFINITE. The name is suggestive of the expansive world view that created the agency and sustained it through the Cold War years, but is now chronically out of date.

The CIA of the 1990s is a vast, global bureaucracy in search of a mission. The Company, as it was known in the old days, is now in liquidation. The end of the Cold War has rendered the massive technical programs developed to monitor the Soviet military largely irrelevant. So too the great covert action programs that were established in the 1950s to battle communism around the globe. The problem now is finding a graceful way to pension off the old networks of agents across Europe. And for all the anguish over the recent arrest of alleged Russian "mole" Aldrich Hazen Ames, the old counter-espionage ballet with the KGB is mostly history, too. Russia and America will continue to spy on each other until the end of time, but the stakes aren't the same now. We give Moscow billions of dollars in aid. At least until the Ames case broke, we were also sharing information with the Russians about common problems.

Yet despite all these changes, the old CIA structure largely remains intact. The agency in 1994 still has stations or bases in nearly every nation on the globe. But to what end? In the old days, the CIA case officers could say they were tracking their Soviet counterparts in the great game of counter-espionage. One former CIA officer explained to me once that he had spent much of a tour in Katmandu, Nepal, trying to recruit the local KGB resident there until he realized that the KGB man, all the while, had been trying to recruit *him*. This sort of shadowboxing kept several generations of CIA officers employed, but it's largely over.

David Ignatius was an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1975 to 1976. He is an assistant managing editor of* The Washington Post *and the author of a trilogy of spy novels about the Middle East:* Agents of Innocence *(1987),* SIRO *(1991), and the forthcoming* The Bank of Fear *(June 1994).*

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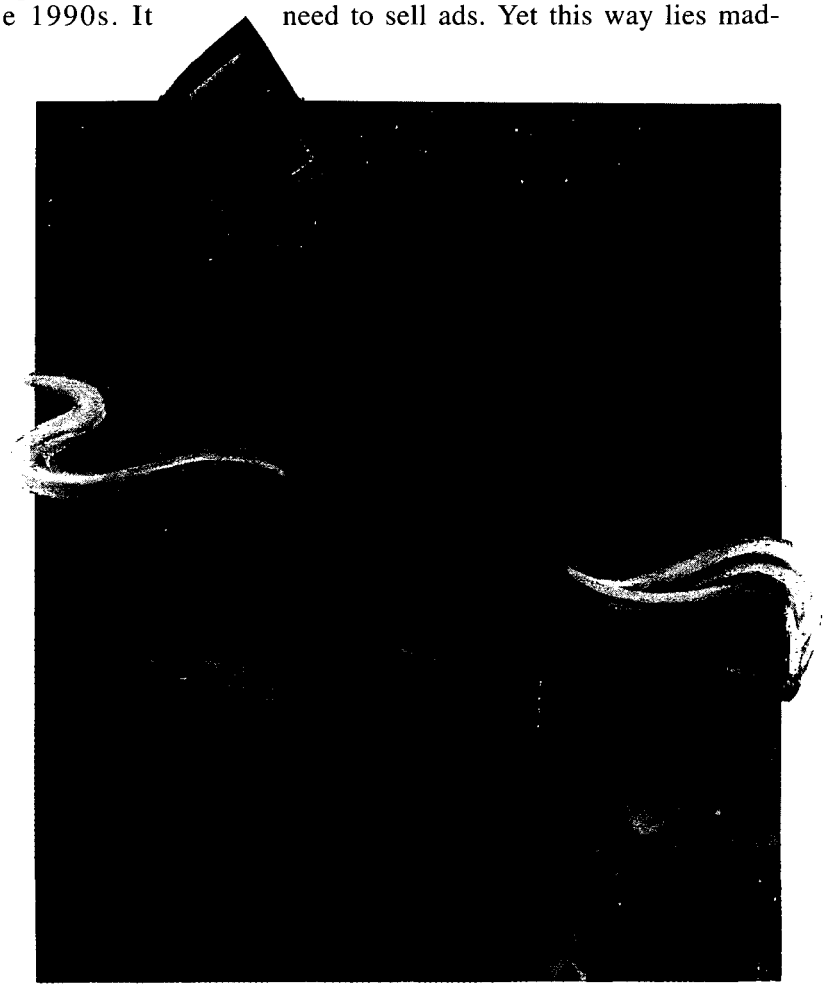
The CIA, probably more than any other agency in the U.S. government, needs to reinvent itself for the post-Cold War world. It doesn't just need tinkering—retargeting its collection programs, smoothing its relations with Congress, looking for new enemies like drug traffickers or economic espionage that will give it a mission for the 1990s. It needs something more fundamental. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has argued that the agency should blow itself up, figuratively speaking, and start over. That may be extreme. But here are a few thoughts about what a reinvented CIA might look like, drawn from conversations with current and former intelligence officials:



- **Less Is More.** The overriding requirement for a new CIA is that it needs to be smaller—and yes, more elite. There are too many case officers chasing the limited number of real spies the United States should be trying to recruit to our side. Does the agency really need stations in places like Dar es Salaam and Kuala Lumpur and Caracas? Certainly the U.S. government will continue to need information from these capitals that will guide policymakers, but that's what the State Department is for. We have ambassadors and political counselors around the world who can meet openly with the local foreign ministry and simply ask the chaps there what's going on (as opposed to recruiting them as spies). Why then do we also need CIA case officers in these Third World capitals?

In the old days, the answer was that we had to go toe-to-toe with the KGB in these outposts to maintain our influence in the nonaligned world. Not any more. Yet the case officers are still out there, trying to recruit agents in the Malaysian foreign ministry, or the Kenyan security service. The real rationale for many of these recruitments, nowadays, is to ensure promotions for case officers, who need to log new recruits the way ad salesmen need to sell ads. Yet this way lies madness. An example of what can happen came several years ago in Ghana when a large network of CIA agents was rolled up by the local security service; several dozen Ghanaian agents and their families had to be relocated to the United States at considerable cost. The question is: Why had they been recruited in the first place?

A smaller clandestine service may be able to recruit the agents the United States needs most to operate in the world of the nineties.

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The hard targets, these days, are places like North Korea, Iran, China, France, and Japan. Collecting real intelligence about these targets will require a loose matrix of case officers—many of them operating under "non-official cover" as business executives abroad. What we have instead is a static structure of case officers posted mostly in embassies and consulates around the world, often with quite flimsy diplomatic cover. They're marching in formation, like the British Redcoats, against an enemy that is hiding behind trees.

• **Depoliticize the CIA—Spend Less Time on Capitol Hill**. One sure sign that a federal agency is in trouble is when senior officials begin to spend large amounts of time stroking members of Congress. The name of the game becomes protecting the budget, rather than doing the job. That's what happened with the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover, when it boasted of its success in solving car thefts and pretended the Mafia didn't exist. It has become a way of life at the Pentagon. And in recent years, this cozy Congress-o-mania has come to afflict the CIA.

The agency in 1993 gave over 1,000 briefings to members of Congress and their staffs, according to one reliable account. The director of Central Intelligence, James Woolsey, personally visited Capitol Hill over 150 times in his first nine months in the job, and over 80 percent of these meetings are said to have been one-on-one sessions with members, explaining the intelligence community's budget. Some senior CIA career officers have been grumbling that Congress sees more of the director than they do.

As Woolsey's frantic briefing schedule suggests, we now have an intelligence agency that works as much for Congress as it does for the executive branch. The process began in the late 1970s, for understandable reasons. The agency, though never the "rogue elephant" its critics suggested, needed more oversight. Since the congressional takeover of the CIA, two developments have been clear: The cost of producing intelligence has gone up substantially, and the quality of the product (by most accounts) has gone down. Neither trend should surprise readers of *The Washington Monthly*. Too often, the oversight process is perverted into a form of political logrolling. Rather than encouraging strong management, Congress ends up reinforcing all the agencies' worst tendencies. If you doubt it, consider this story making the rounds at the CIA: Some members of Congress are said to be questioning the agency's modest efforts to close unnecessary stations in Africa, on the theory that a reduced CIA presence there would signal disrespect. Can it be that cutting CIA operations in Africa has become politically incorrect?

The congressional takeover of the CIA has produced another, more troubling phenomenon: An agency that resisted politicization even at the height of Watergate (recall Richard Helms' refusal to take the fall for Richard Nixon after the burglary, and his subsequent exile to Iran) is increasingly being drawn into political squabbles. A recent case in point was the flap over the agency's psychological profile of exiled Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide. Conservative members of Congress requested the briefing from the conservative national intelligence officer for Latin America, Brian Latell, and requested specifically that he talk about Aristide. Almost immediately, raw intelligence about the Haitian leader's mental health (including a so-far unsubstantiated allegation that he was hospitalized after a nervous breakdown) was leaked. The problem here isn't with the CIA collecting such information or briefing policymakers about it. The country needs an intelligence service that will gather sensitive information about foreign leaders—especially when that information calls U.S. policy into question. The problems arise when these secrets become political footballs, with conservatives punting in one direction, and liberals in another.

• **Beware of New Enemies, Like Drug Traffickers**. In its eagerness to make itself useful in the post-Cold War world, the CIA (with considerable pushing from Congress) has embraced a new mission combating international drug traffickers. But is this really what the United States wants its intelligence agency to be doing? Last year's flap over CIA penetration of a Venezuelan drug ring illus-

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trates the problems. According to news reports, a CIA/DEA counter-narcotics operation there went awry, and drugs got onto the street in the United States. Why didn't the CIA stop the drugs, critics wonder.

There may be a confusion of roles here. When it comes to the drug war, people understandably expect the CIA to act like the police—catching dealers, seizing drugs, making arrests. They forget that the CIA is an intelligence agency. When a CIA operations officer sees something bad happening, his first reaction isn't to swoop in and break it up, police-style, but to stand in the shadows and watch it for awhile to see where it leads. When such intelligence tactics are directed against drug traffickers, they may ultimately yield valuable information, but they are bound to be corrosive for the CIA. And sometimes, as evidently was the case in Venezuela, the operations will go sour.

Case officers are still out there, trying to recruit agents in the Malaysian foreign ministry, or the Kenyan security service. The real rationale for many of these recruitments is to ensure promotions for case officers, who need to log new recruits the way salesmen need to sell ads.

The truth is that drugs and the CIA are a bad mix. For 30 years, the CIA has been dogged by allegations that it was involved, through its agents and operatives, in the narcotics trade. The rumors stretch from Laos and Vietnam to Afghanistan to Nicaragua. In some cases, given the agency's need for information from the low-lifes that inhabit the drug world, the rumors are probably true. Given this history, a strong argument can be made that the CIA needs to spend less time around the honey pot of narcotics, not more. Assigning the CIA to stop the narcos may literally be Mission Impossible.

The strange bedfellows problem also applies to another growth area for the CIA—the war against terrorism. The public needs to understand the reality of the CIA's anti-terrorism operations. To get information, it puts its own people inside terrorist cells; and sometimes, when necessary, it strikes deals with terrorists. Some years ago, I wrote a novel describing one such relationship. The book described how, for most of the 1970s, the CIA maintained a secret relationship with Yasser Arafat's chief of intelligence. It was, in many ways, a pact with the devil. But it saved lives. Would today's CIA leadership, busy briefing Congress, be so bold?

➤ **Get Smart about Counter-Intelligence.** Behind the recent arrest of Aldrich Ames is a problem more serious, in the long run, than all the machinations of the Russian intelligence service. That problem, according to knowledgeable observers, is the dry rot and bureaucratic incompetence that has come to afflict the agency's spying and covert action arm, the Directorate of Operations.

Though the Ames case got the publicity, it's just one of a series of recent counter-intelligence disasters. During the past dozen years, CIA operations have been compromised in Egypt, East Germany, Cuba, Ghana, and Iran. The underlying mistake in many of these cases was the same: Excessive dependence on the polygraph as a means of establishing the bona fides of agents being recruited in the field. Ames allegedly passed two polygraph tests after being recruited by Moscow. Double agents from Cuba and East Germany are said to have duped the lie detector, too.

What's worrisome is that these counter-intelligence cock-ups seem illustrative of a larger problem in operations. The agency simply isn't devoting enough brainpower to the task of recruiting and vetting agents. Like the "body count" in McNamara's Vietnam, recruitment has become a numbers game. Insiders complain that case officers are wasting

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time "developing" agents—i.e., having expensive meals with them—who will never be recruited. Sometimes case officers are claiming to have recruited agents when they have done no such thing. In too many instances, the recruitment mill has drawn in false or useless agents, sometimes with disastrous consequences.

The answer to all these problems, insiders say, is to exercise more care and judgment in targeting operations. The agency in the 1990s should pay less attention to the great god of recruitment and more to the quality of information it is seeking to acquire; less attention to machines like the polygraph, and more to people.

➤ **Rethink Covert Action for the 1990s**. In the New World Disorder, the United States often seems powerless to affect events. The options in places like Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti tend to have an all-or-nothing quality. The post-Vietnam U.S. military wants to fight only popular, winnable wars, where it can overpower the other side and guarantee a quick victory. In practice, that means sending in hundreds of thousands of troops, as in Desert Storm, or doing nothing. It's no surprise, given this limited menu of options, that the United States has generally chosen to do nothing. Where it has deviated from this massive force rule, as in Somalia, the U.S. has regretted it.

Yet this policy of doing nothing to stop the slaughter in places like Bosnia has left many Americans feeling uncomfortable. And it's reasonable to ask whether the CIA could make a useful contribution. Is there a covert option in situations where the overt use of military force is deemed inappropriate? Sometimes covert action would simply mean bringing barbaric practices to light and publicizing them. In other cases, it might mean working more aggressively with the democratic opposition in countries like Serbia, Iraq, and Iran. In a few cases, it might even mean covert paramilitary operations against a country like Serbia, that would raise the price of aggression. Given the dangers associated with these covert options, the wisest course may still be to do nothing. But for the old boys and old girls at PNINFINITE, the questions are at least worth asking. □

Insiders say the person on the White House staff who has the most influence on economic policy is not **Robert Rubin**, the director of the National Economic Council, but Rubin's young deputy, **Gene Sperling**. An alumnus of the campaign, Sperling is part of the powerful **George Stephanopoulos** gang, which is said to overshadow officials like **Leon Panetta**, **Alice Rivlin**, **Lloyd Bentsen**, and **Roger Altman**, all of whom joined Clinton after the election. Sperling's power is also based on hard work, staying up late and getting up early so he can put his memos on important desks when no one is around to object. . . .

Jerry Seper of *The Washington Times* is becoming the **Bob Woodward** of **Whitewater**. We have already noted how he beat the competition on the removal of papers from **Vince Foster**'s office. Then on February 9 Seper revealed that the Rose Law Firm had been shredding Whitewater documents. His story was subsequently corroborated by a front page story in *The New York Times*, but not until March 4. . . .

Bill and **Hillary Clinton** cannot be comforted by the news that special prosecutor **Robert Fiske** contributed $1,000 to Senator **Alfonse D'Amato**'s campaign in 1992. . . .

The scandals in the Clinton administration have yet to produce an indictment or conviction, something that cannot be said for the Reagan and Bush administrations, whose latest felonious alumnae include **Deborah Gore Dean**, the former executive assistant to **Samuel R. Pierce**, Reagan's HUD Secretary, and **Catalina Vasquez Villalpando**, Treasurer of the United States under **George Bush**. . . .

How do Republican lobbyists gain favor with a Democratic administration? Writer **Sheila Kaplan** offers **Craig Fuller** as an example. Realizing that his credentials as manager of the 1992 Republican National Convention wouldn't command inside access to the **Clinton** White House, he volunteered to round up Republican votes for NAFTA. Fuller's legwork may have paid off when the administration dropped the proposed excise tax from $2 to 75 cents on tobacco products such as those manufactured by Fuller's client Philip Morris. . . .

The Senate, where Democrats must decide on a replacement for **George Mitchell**, is not the only chamber where a leadership contest looms. Some freshmen members of the House of Representatives are threatening that they will refuse to back House Speaker **Tom Foley** when he tries to renew his post in December. The freshmen Democrats (who would not dare reveal their names) complain that Foley hasn't been responsive to freshmen congressional reform efforts; he has not tried to cultivate freshmen politically; and he isn't force

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Who's Who

ful enough to be able to convince Democrats to fall in line with controversial bills. The disgruntled freshmen are hoping that Foley will have an opponent that they can support. Their preferences: Majority Leader **Richard Gephardt** of Missouri, Majority Whip **David Bonior** of Michigan, or Representative **George Brown** of California. . . .

The most photographed mailbox in history, the one that the accused spy **Aldrich Ames** is said to have marked with chalk to communicate with his Russian contacts, is at the corner of 37th and R streets, a few blocks west of Georgetown and just across the street from the house in which **Katharine Graham** and her late husband, **Philip**, began their marriage more than 50 years ago. . . .

We're sure you've read about **Bill Clinton**'s statement that he had put astroturf in the back of his pickup for a purpose he was sure his audience didn't want to know. But have you heard about his subsequent attempt to clarify that statement on a radio show hosted by **Don Imus**? Clinton said the astroturf "wasn't for what everyone thought it was for" but that it protected his luggage. Imus commented, "I mean that's like saying you didn't inhale, Mr. President. Come on, here."

"No," replied Clinton, "it's just that I didn't inhale in the back of the pickup." . . .

John Kasich, the Ohio Republican on the House Budget Committee, represents a dangerous combination for the administration: He is very smart and very conservative—and knows how to give administration witnesses fits by exposing phony budget items. . . .

We are told that most foreign policy decisions are being made by a group consisting of **Tony Lake**, **Sandy Berger**, **Frank Wisner**, and **Peter Tarnoff**, and on matters affecting the former Soviet Union, **Strobe Talbott**. Secretary of State **Warren Christopher** was not even invited to an important White House strategy session the morning of **Bill Clinton**'s meeting with Japanese Prime Minister **Morihiro Hosokawa**. . . .

At a recent conference **Lake** was unwilling to answer when asked why **William Perry** would be a better secretary of Defense than **Les Aspin**. One difference between Aspin and Perry is in their regard for **Graham Allison**, an Aspin appointee whose resignation was quickly requested by Perry. Allison had also made, we were told, two influential enemies, **Frank Wisner** and **Strobe Talbott**. . . .

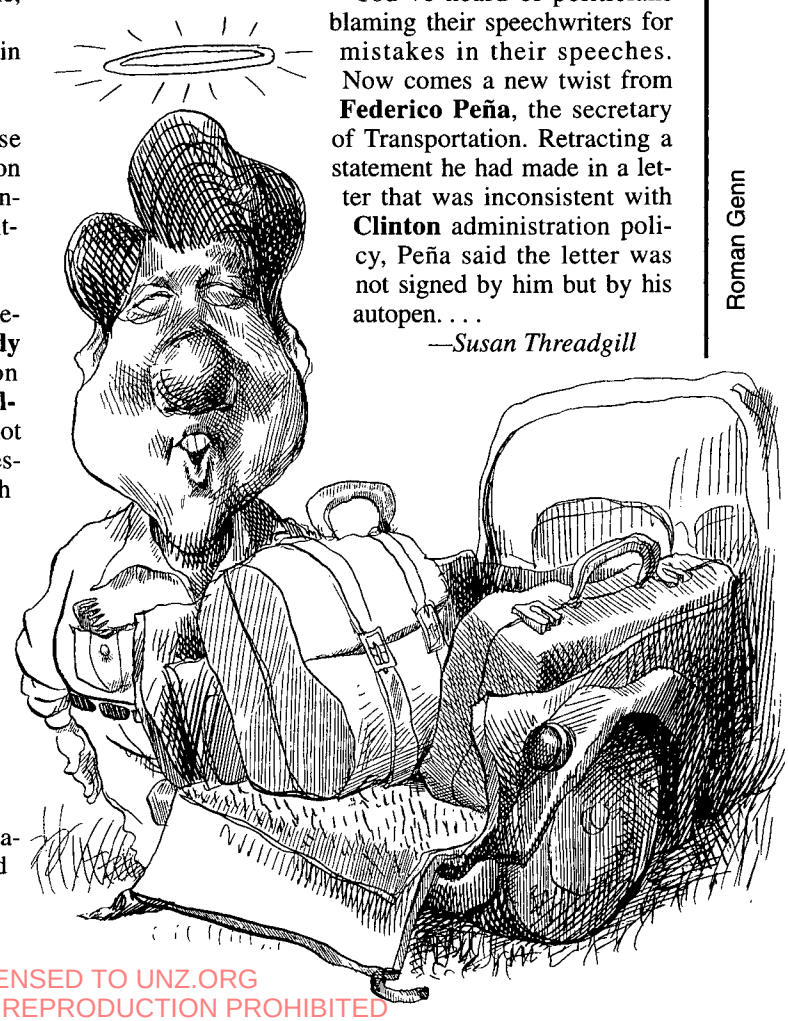
In 1987, **Paul Glastris** wrote an article for this magazine entitled "The Powers That Shouldn't Be." It named five prominent public figures who should *not* be part of the next Democratic administration. One of the five was **Perry,** of whom Glastris remarked, "He approved dud weapons, opposed independent testing, discouraged dissent, and has a license plate that reads HI TECH." . . .

R. W. "Johnny" Apple of *The New York Times* is alleged to have been caught switching the seating arrangement at a recent dinner party at the Spanish Embassy. He didn't want to sit next to the person his hosts had intended to place at his side. Johnny has our sympathy.

Spirits sink or soar at Washington dinner parties as guests take a peek at the seating charts and realize that they've won the lottery by being placed next to the man or woman of their dreams or that they have been condemned to endure the most boring person in town or the icy silence of an old enemy. **Beth Peters**, the wife of our editor, has on three occasions been seated next to a public official who had recently been described in these pages in terms the victim clearly thought uncharitable. . . .

You've heard of politicians blaming their speechwriters for mistakes in their speeches. Now comes a new twist from **Federico Peña**, the secretary of Transportation. Retracting a statement he had made in a letter that was inconsistent with **Clinton** administration policy, Peña said the letter was not signed by him but by his autopen. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*



Roman Genn

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The Real Founder of the New Journalism

Tom Wolfe may be more famous, but it was Murray Kempton, starting in the fifties, who made reporting funnier and smarter. The good news is, he's still at it

BY DAVID HALBERSTAM

Rebellions, Perversities, and Main Events
Murray Kempton, *Times Books, $27.50*

The first time I saw Murray Kempton was 39 years ago, in the summer of 1955, when he was covering the Emmett Till trial in Mississippi for the *New York Post*. I was 21 that summer, working as a reporter in a small town in the northeast part of the state, and I had decided to do a magazine piece for the old *Reporter* on the way different reporters covered the trial. I had subscribed to about a dozen different papers and clipped them every day, and although I was never able to pull the piece off, there was never any doubt about who was the most brilliant and lyrical writer covering the trial.

Every day it seemed there was one more of his columns in the *Post*, and they were the work of a master craftsman writing at his best. They were more like small, almost perfect short stories, catching the rage and the fear as well as the curious humanity of Mississippi in that terrifying summer. If there was an inventor of something called the New Journalism, I always thought it was not Tom Wolfe and his colleagues working for a dying *Herald Tribune* a decade later. Rather it was Murray Kempton, writing those marvelous nonfiction short stories from Sumner, Mississippi, in 1955. Twice on my day off I ventured over to Sumner to watch the national reporters in action, those mighty figures from the great metropolitan dailies whose ranks I one day wanted to join, and though we did not meet that year (I did not have the courage to approach him), I watched Murray carefully from afar. He was a slender figure even then, perfectly dressed in the summer uniform of the national reporter in that pre-air conditioning age: cord jacket, button-down shirt, striped tie, khaki pants.

He had about him a dignity that everyone else covering the trial, save Johnny Popham, the wonderful *New York Times* reporter, lacked, and he seemed a man at once at the center of the reporters covering the trial, a peer figure of great renown—as the best writer in any group of re-

David Halberstam's book on the 1964 World Series between the Yankees and the Cardinals, October 1964, *will be published this summer.*

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porters is always at the top of the pecking order—and yet somehow a man apart, working to his own rhythms and cadence, a man who looked and saw things that others did not see, and listened and heard things that others did not hear.

Jay Milner, who was covering the trial for Hodding Carter's Greenville *Delta Democrat*, knew the territory, became a kind of bodyguard for Murray in those days, and later became a friend of mine. Jay told me what great fun it was to pal around with Murray, often drinking with him into the very late night, and that Murray had arrived with the perfect reporter's kit: not just the right summer clothes for a blazing Mississippi summer, but far more importantly, his own portable record player and his own collection of 33 1/3 LPs, almost all blues, which he played while he wrote through the night in his motel room in Clarksdale. Jay thought Murray had decided to bring with him to Sumner a portable record player in order to capture the mood of the region, which he suspected, quite properly, would be excluded from the record of the trial at Sumner.

Murray Kempton today.

I met Murray for the first time some seven years later at a ceremony where we were both picking up awards. I was then reporting from the Congo, and we spoke for a brief time, not about American politics, and God knows not about the Congo, but about which American jazz figure was at that moment our musical export with the broadest popular base. As I recall, he suggested Thelonious Monk, while I thought it was the pre-Diet Pepsi Ray Charles. With that our friendship could begin. Over the years we have remained friends, and because we have remained friends, and because he has a friend who lives on the street where I live, I see him often now, a slender elegant figure defying the traffic of New York on his bicycle, wearing those old-fashioned metal cuffs on his pants so that his trousers won't get caught in his bike.

He always wears a Walkman and he has, I suspect, Mozart or Schubert or Monk playing so that he can drown out the modern song of New York. I am usually walking my dog when we meet, and we linger and our conversations are wonderful and eccentric, for conversation with Murray is like listening to the flight of a great modern jazzman; it is as much riff as it is conversation, it takes off in flight, goes off in one direction, footnotes itself, changes direction, one subject constantly slipping into another, each reference bringing up yet another, as ever esoteric and ubiquitous: the decline of whatever New York mayor currently is in office, the unfortunate duplicity of whoever is president, the melancholia of being a sports fan in New York, the beauty of Michael Jordan. The conversations are always enriching, for he is usually trying out his columns on his friends, talking them out to see how they sound. The latest volume of his work, the first collection of Kempton since 1963, is *Rebellions, Perversities, and Main Events*, which brings together writings from the *Post*, *Newsday*, *The New York Review of Books*, and other publications.

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"LIKE A JAZZ RIFF"

A conversation with Murray Kempton

Murray's great gift is legwork so I thought I would do some legwork for this piece. One night about 7:30, sure he was through for the day, I called him at *Newsday* to leave a message so that I could interview him the next morning. By chance a familiar voice answered the phone, even though it was quite late. "Is Murray Kempton there?" I asked. "He is, but he is very busy right now," the voice of Murray Kempton said. I explained my high purpose (and probable low pay) for this article and he was immediately engaged, more by the idea that I would make so little writing for a magazine than by the prospect that he would once again be memorialized in print.

I reminded him of the Till trial and mentioned Jay Milner, who was a mutual friend of ours. Because Jay was a man of size and an ex-college football player (he was a poor Texas boy who had been lured to play football at Mississippi Southern at Hattiesburg, and had shown up there under the mistaken impression that he was going to the rather grander Ole Miss at Oxford), he had been, in that tense situation, something of a protective angel for Murray. "Jay was something of a batman for you at the trial," I suggested. "No," said Murray, "I was *his* batman." Then he digressed. "I wrote *terribly* at the Till trial. Jimmy Desmond of the *Daily News* wrote well. I was terrible." That was, of course, false. I mentioned my memory (and Jay's) of Murray showing up there with his portable record player and his collection of blues, and doing his best writing late at night in his room to the sound of Basie and Miles Davis and Monk.

"I don't think the sheriff liked Simeon coming to my room—that wasn't done in those days, a black reporter and a white reporter drinking and listening to music in the same room."

"That's a myth, I'm afraid, one of the many myths about me. I didn't have a record player. Simeon Booker of *Ebony* used to come over to my room in the motel at Clarksdale, and he had an old wire recorder and he made up a lot of wire recordings of jazz and we used to play them late at night when we were drinking. But I never had a portable phonograph. I'm sure Jay is wrong. I wonder what happened to Jay. I don't think the sheriff or deputy sheriff liked Simeon coming to my room—that wasn't done in those days, a black reporter and a white reporter drinking and listening to music in the same room. Simeon was a wonderful man. I always wondered why he wasn't in the cabinet for some president." That convinced me all the more that Murray had, indeed, had a record player with him and that Jay was right, and it brought me back to the present and so I asked what he listens to on his Walkman when I see him on our street, jazz or classical music?

"Schubert," he said, "always Schubert—it's an affectation." I told him I thought that the columns which are collected in the current book reread well. "I get annoyed at myself for not getting out on the street more. All my best work comes when I get out and get around—my work has to have a good quote from someone else to be any good." That led him to a discussion of Jimmy Breslin, whom he thinks is a brilliant journalist, in no small part because Breslin still gets around and works the streets, and to George Vecsey of the *Times*, whom he thinks is doing very good work. "He's very good on irrelevant sports, like soccer. But then that's a Queens sport."

I thought it was time to go, and so I said I would see him on the street with my dog. "God bless you," he said.

—*David Halberstam*

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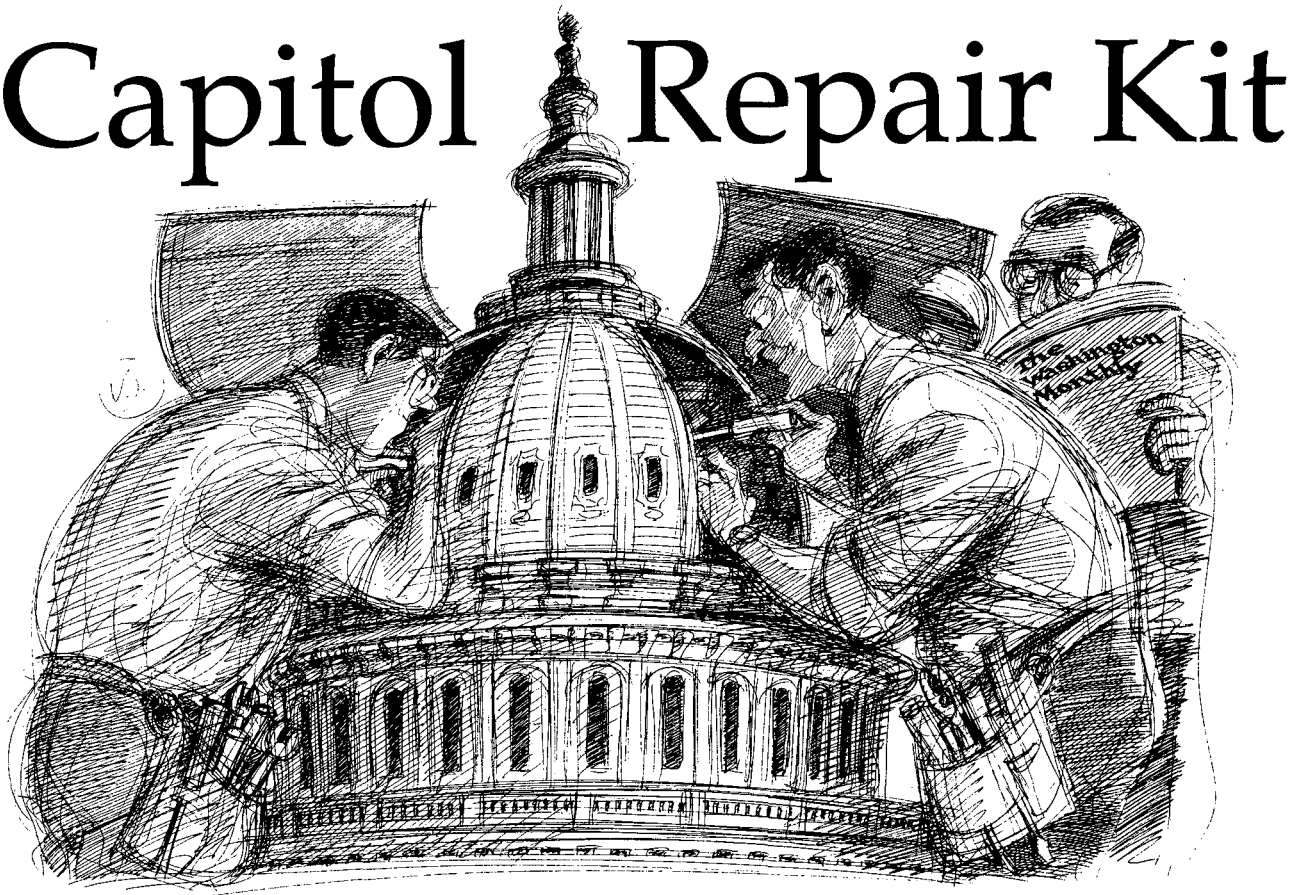

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Though it is almost 40 years later, and the cast of characters has changed, and Homer Bigart and Johnny Popham have been replaced by men and women who were not even born at the time of that Mississippi summer, Murray remains in many ways the same figure he was then: elegant, graceful, admired by his peers (even though they are 40 years younger than the peers who once admired him) not just for the craftsmanship of his work, the high literary and reportorial quality of it, but also for his conduct as a professional, his unfailing courtesy and generosity to those around him, particularly those who are younger. He is loved and respected as very few people in this profession are. He is imitated almost as much as he is loved, but the imitators almost always fall short, for in the unlikely event that they can write nearly as well, they almost surely lack the intellect that also guides and distinguishes his work. And if by chance they have some of the intellect as well, they almost surely do little of his marvelous daily legwork. He is still very much the reporter, and his best columns are those where he gets out and does street reporting—"gets around," to use his own phrase.

He is a man driven by irony and self-deprecation, the great skeptic of the American Century. He has an unfailing instinct for the truth not just of a situation but of a person, and a profound sense of life's irony. He vastly prefers both people and ideas which are out of fashion, has a fond spot for the newly convicted, as opposed to those newly elected, and by instinct gravitates to the loser's locker room rather than that of the winner. It is said that Governor Cuomo, puzzled because Murray writes quite unsympathetically of him, once asked Sydney Schanberg of *Newsday* what he could do to have Murray write more favorably of him. "Get indicted," Schanberg told Cuomo. It is true that Murray is wary of positions that are fashionable, and of one young columnist whose work he does not admire, he told me rather coldly, "He has very safe opinions."

For much of the last six years I was working on a book on the fifties, and as such I went back over Murray's old columns and articles of that period. *No one* wrote better of that time, and rarely does any body of work stand up as well as his collections of pieces on that era, *Part of Our Time*. Occasionally I would call him to check up on something, and he would answer, and then I would reread what he had written in an old column, and I was stunned not just by the completeness of the contemporary answer but the fidelity of his memory of events, often 40 years after covering them. He managed to survive those years at the *Post* where he wrote five times a week, for peon's wages, the reward clearly, as that great Calvinist Dorothy Schiff thought, being in the doing.

Murray has been writing a column for some 50 years, and he is still very good; he still has the capacity to write beautifully; and he has the capacity to surprise the reader with his ideas. In addition, he remains a man of civility and decency and courage in a profession where each quality is almost always in short supply, now regrettably more so than ever. □

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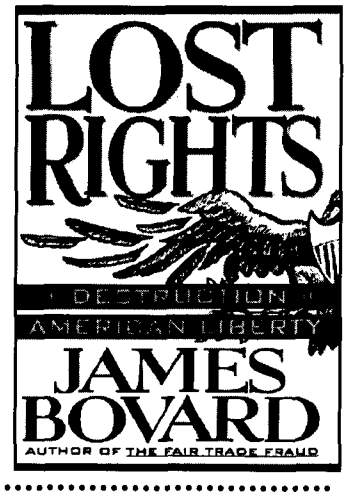

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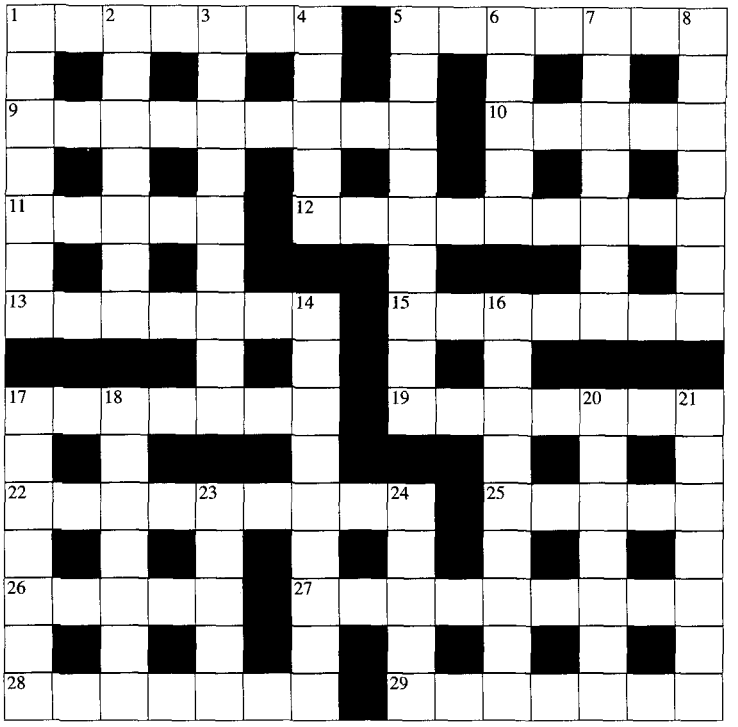
Political Puzzle

BY JOHN BARCLAY

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



ACROSS

1 & 5. Fear dance level shaking D.C. (7,7)
9. Opposing model train sets. (9)
10. Extremist test group adds reverse skill. (5)
11. Overturn nude dancing around April 2. (5)
12. Ancient city is smooth around a blemish. (9)
13. Dimensions of former primitive dwellings. (7)
15. Run again in evergreen termite world. (7)
17. Make distinctions about nice little physicians. (7)
19. Organic makes it cheap. (7)
22. Lowering one story? (9)
25. Wild urge about love powder. (5)
26. Played *Trout Quintet* for teacher. (5)
27. Changing a seat line separates. (9)
28 & 29. Shake up cool grits and part of 1 Across. (7,7)

DOWN

1. Chance supporting air. (7)
2. It sends hysterical message of opposition. (7)
3. Catered nice Seder for home. (9)
4. A sled involved star parts. (5)
5. Body type sporting chrome top. (9)
6. John Barclay, for example, is pretty cruel. (5)
7. Bring in near-propaganda piece. (7)
8. Hermes' son is ringleader—and ever changing. (7)
14. Give trendy notice of renovated denim sale. (4,1-4)
16. Tongue-twisting neat prose. (9)
17. Played its card at the extreme. (7)
18. Begin to eat consuming pastry. (5,2)
20. It turns around to rely on. (5,2)
21. Hockey spots a model of wealth, we hear. (7)
23. Heron is the last of sorrow. (5)
24. Hang up for mere $1000. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:

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A Mayor With Convictions

A steamy new history of Washington politics argues that Marion Barry's real victims were the people who trusted him most: the city's poor

BY MARK FELDSTEIN

Dream City: Race, Power, and the Decline of Washington, D.C., 1964-1994
Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood, *Simon & Schuster, $23*

Two years after he emerged from a federal penitentiary, Marion Barry is back. Decked out in African regalia, with a new wife at his side—his fourth, who is, like his second, a convicted felon—the former mayor plots his political comeback. From the D.C. Council he holds forth in his endless quest for respectability.

In their new book on the Barry era, *Dream City*, Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood remind us of how much damage Barry did to his adopted city, and especially to the poor he claimed to champion. Sherwood, who has covered him for nearly 20 years, first at *The Washington Post* and then at WRC-TV, and Jaffe, a writer for *Washingtonian* magazine, provide the first comprehensive political history of both the former mayor and the District of Columbia.

Along the way, the authors dish out some juicy tidbits. According to the book, Barry's own lawyer, Herbert Reid, said privately of the mayor, "If it walks, Marion fucks it. If it doesn't, he ingests it." *Dream City* is filled with stories suggesting Reid understood his client well. Once, Barry's second wife apparently got so tired of Barry's philandering that she put a pistol to his head, saying "Nigger, I'm tired of this shit. I'm gonna blow your fucking brains out."

Mark Feldstein, a correspondent for CNN's Special Assignment investigative unit, covered the Barry administration from 1984 to 1990.

But *Dream City* is more than a compilation of Barry's tawdry exploits. It is also a history of local Washington—black Washington—and its forgotten pain. The book weaves back and forth between the history of the city and the rise and fall of Barry, arguing that "Barry's descent. . . eerily mirrored the city's own decline." It's a compelling metaphor, but the authors never develop it, apparently unable to decide whether Barry's Washington is uniquely flawed or the victim of problems that afflict all of urban America.

The book's strength is the simple and real human drama of its story. It follows the "Chicken Express," the railroad cars that brought blacks north during the great migration from the South after World War II. Born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, Marion Barry was part of that migration. He began his life picking cotton in the Delta just as his slave ancestors did. He wore cardboard shoes. He never knew his father.

Barry's journey north took him first into the civil rights movement in Tennessee. About this time, his first wife divorced him, saying he "disappeared" and left her "impoverished." But Barry moved on. He adopted "Shepilov" as his middle name, after a Soviet propagandist. He became the first head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, although his colleagues there say Barry ducked the Freedom Rides. In any case, political liberation became personal liberation for Barry,

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and he channelled his inchoate rage in a way that gave his life purpose.

In 1965, Barry moved to Washington and took over the city's fledgling civil rights movement. His "Free DC" campaign—hitting up white businesses for donations with the promise of protection from picketing—was virtually a shake-down racket. He used the same approach to set up Pride, Inc., the job training program underwritten by Lyndon Johnson's Labor Department after Barry maumaued the administration with threats of riots. "I'm going all the way to the top," Barry vowed at the time. "I'm going to control this city."

Not yet. Even some respectable Washington liberals thought that was still a job for whites only. Sherwood and Jaffe cite Joseph Califano, an LBJ lawyer and advisor who later represented the *Post*, who wrote that when the time came for District home rule, *Post* publisher Katharine Graham and her then-managing editor, Ben Bradlee, met with Califano to suggest that a white should be appointed mayor. Who did they have in mind? Averell Harriman, Edward Bennett Williams, Nelson Rockefeller, Dean Acheson, or Sargent Shriver. It was only after Roger Wilkins, then a young White House aide, pointed out how silly it would be to pass a home-rule bill and then name a white man mayor of a majority-black city that Walter Washington, a black, was appointed.

Meanwhile, Barry exercised his power from the street. He baited the police, fomented his own arrest, and then exploited it to make himself a hero in the black community. Soon, he was trading in his dashiki for a suit, winning election to the school board and then the city council.

District Crime

His drug use also allegedly began during this time—first marijuana with his movement buddies, then cocaine at swank bars. His political stock soared when he was shot by Hanafi Muslim militants in a siege at the District building in 1977. Afterward, in his hospital room, a catfight nearly erupted between his current wife and his steady girlfriend at the time, Effi Cowell. Barry married Effi shortly thereafter. (His advisor Ivanhoe Donaldson insisted on it to clean up Barry's image for his upcoming mayoral bid.)

In 1978, Barry was elected mayor in an upset, largely thanks to a series of election-eve endorsements by the *Post*. "He was a bit of a roughneck," said editor Phil Geylin, "but. . . I thought Barry could take people who might run amok, who might be hostile to society and to the government, and lead them in a healthy direction." Gracious in victory, Barry credited Graham with being "the lady that made me." "Yes, Marion," Graham reportedly replied, "and don't you forget it."

Barry didn't forget it—nor did he forget the rest of the white business community. "In return for financing his campaigns, for withholding most criticisms of his government, and for including Barry's friends in their deals," Jaffe and Sherwood write, "Barry would give the businessmen almost a free hand in developing Washington's downtown business district." One developer, Jeffrey Cohen, godfather to Barry's son, got millions in tax breaks and deals from the Barry administration. In February 1985, for example, the city paid Cohen $11 million for land it valued at only $6.7 million. And Cohen set up a dummy corporation to give Barry a secret 10 percent partnership in a million-dollar office building in Massachusetts.

It was much the same when it came to awarding city contracts. Here, Barry sold out for mere pennies on the dollar—"crumbs," as one former city official put it, of women and drugs. As a lobbyist for the Greater Washington Board of Trade said, "a little sleaze will never stand in the way of economic development."

It was this kind of sleaze that came at the expense of the city's poor. As Barry's first term wound down, there were reports that his first wife, Mary Treadwell, with whom he had run Pride, Inc., had diverted the program's federal funds to her own bank account. Barry said he had suspected nothing, even though Treadwell drove a Mercedes, had bought Barry a Volvo, and paid for art, jewelry, and trips to the Caribbean—all on a

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$23,000 annual salary. The feds also charged Treadwell with defrauding the government of money intended for Clifton Terrace, a low-income housing development. (In 1983, Treadwell was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison.)

Under Barry's mayoral regime, infant mortality was up, welfare checks were late, emergency ambulances never showed up at all. It's not that there wasn't enough money; Washington's taxes are among the highest per capita in the country. Rather, too much money went to too many cronies, and the money that *did* get into the system was wildly mismanaged.

For example, the aptly named Pitts welfare motel charged taxpayers more to rent a room to a homeless person than it would have cost to rent a suite at the Watergate. Millions of dollars that Barry could have collected from the federal government to build public housing was lost because his administration failed to file the proper paperwork. This all happened in the mid-eighties, when public housing waiting lists were double what they were in 1974 and a HUD audit found that apartments remained vacant for an average of a year and a half—plenty of time for vandals to destroy the chance that one of those 13,000 people waiting (some for as long as 10 years) might get a decent home.

Just as bad, according to the book, was the way Barry corrupted the city's police, promoting officers based on their willingness to ignore or cover up his own drug crimes. Time after time, honest cops were punished for trying to investigate the numerous reports of the mayor's drug use. Some police, acting as bodyguards, even accompanied Barry on his nocturnal prowling; "the dog is running" was the code-phrase they used over the police radio. At the same time, Barry slashed the number of officers and lowered minimum standards to the point where convicted felons were being hired as cops.

Gangster days were at hand. "We call it Hoovering," Barry is said to have declared at one party as he sucked up cocaine like a vacuum cleaner. Three times he allegedly overdosed in the capital. In Los Angeles, while a snowstorm paralyzed Washington, he apparently overdosed at a Super Bowl party; an ambulance picked him up as he sat on a street curb. Jaffe and Sherwood write that when cocaine got Barry too high, he used Valium to bring himself down; when Valium was too weak, he tried Xanax. Barry's speech slurred; sweat poured from his brow; he had perpetual nosebleeds. He missed morning meetings and had to be roused from bed by his bodyguards. His friends and staff, led by Carol Thompson, his chief of staff, covered for him.

The District's city council—puppets of Barry's nicknamed the "Marionettes"—did little to stop the damage. In part, the problem was the city's limited home rule, which as Jaffe and Sherwood point out, stunted the city's local politics by attracting only mediocre talent to an arena that has no potential reward of national office. The press was part of the problem, too. The *Post,* perhaps cowed by white liberal guilt, never turned its full investigative spotlight on Barry's corruption and misgovernment. Yet the authors do not discuss Sherwood's role in this coverage even though he was then the paper's main reporter on the story. In fact, *Post* writer Juan Williams' articles gathering the evidence—as originally reported, piecemeal, by local television stations, the *Post*, and *The Washington Times*—and presenting readers with a pattern of incompetence were published not in the *Post* but first in the *Monthly* in 1986 and later in *Regardie's* and *The New Republic*. The *Post* editorial page was deafeningly silent on Barry's exploits and failures, continuing to endorse him through the eighties. So the District's sores festered, and Barry's power went unchecked.

Finally, Rasheeda Moore turned Barry in during the Vista Hotel FBI sting. She later testified about how Barry hid cocaine in the cuff of his pants and under the rugs of an apartment where they met for trysts. She told of coking it up with Barry in her basement, then coming upstairs to chat with her mother, who asked Barry for advice about what to do with her drug-addicted son. The answer, said Barry, still high on coke, was treatment.

Such ironies fill this book. Another, as Jaffe and Sherwood point out, was that

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even if Barry had wanted to get treatment, he would have had a difficult time, since his administration had opened so few drug rehab centers; most of those that were around were poorly run, turning addicts away for weeks and months. Not that Barry ever seemed to want such help. Even after his arrest, the blame always fell elsewhere. "The bitch set me up," he cried as he was handcuffed at the Vista. Later, to a sympathetic TV interviewer, Barry said, "that was the disease talking. . . . I was a victim." The more he came under attack, the more he waved the bloody shirt of race, embracing Louis Farrakhan, and polarizing the city along racial lines. When it finally came time to confess his sins in a tearful Sunday morning church service, he admitted only that, "I spent so much time caring about and worrying about and doing for others, I've not worried about or cared enough for myself."

Such self-serving excuses are artfully exposed in this book, but the authors seem unable to explain Barry's psyche. One of his poker-playing buddies calls Barry a "sociopath." An ex-wife says he "had no center." Chief of Staff Thompson calls Barry a "child." Thompson, a light-skinned beauty, says Barry told her that "You're one of the black people who's going to be successful. I was never meant to succeed. I'm from a poor background. . . . White people will never accept me."

How ironic, and how sad. It wasn't the color of his skin that brought down Marion Barry; it was the content of his character. In fact, it was the white-owned *Washington Post* and the white voters of Ward Three who provided the essential margin to elect Barry mayor in the first place. But as Jaffe and Sherwood note, the publicly defiant Barry "in his heart yearned for [white] approval, and believed that it would never come. The strut, the late entrances—even the women and the drugs—were an expression of that essential conflict between what Barry needed and what he knew he could never have." Except that he did have it, and he threw it all away; convinced that his destruction was pre-ordained, he insured that it was. □

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CROWN

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The Knowledge Deficit

James Fallows' new book urges Americans to understand the fundamental—and crucial—differences between the Asian economies and our own

BY MICHAEL CRICHTON

Looking at the Sun
James Fallows, *Pantheon Books, $25*

James Fallows' remarkable new book is not so much about Asian economies as about Western conceptions of those economies; his subject is nothing less than what happens when economic theory collides with real world experience. I should say at once that Fallows is my friend, and has advised me on a previous book of my own. Thus readers who seek a critique of Fallows' views should look elsewhere, since I agree with what he has to say. In *Looking at the Sun*, he has undertaken a daunting subject, but one that logically follows from his own experience in recent years.

Returning to America in 1989 after serving as *The Atlantic Monthly*'s Asian correspondent for four years, Fallows, who has since spent another year and a half on the road in Asia, became one of the most visible of the so-called "revisionist" thinkers on Japan. The revisionists were a small and diverse group that included Chalmers Johnson, professor of economics at the University of California; Clyde Prestowitz, a former U.S. Trade Representative; Karel van Wolferen, a Dutch journalist living in Japan; and Pat Choate, a Washington economist. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the revisionists were reviled as wrong-headed, destructive, uninformed Japan-bashers. Their opponents often hinted that they were racist as well.

But as is so often the case, the truth of this situation was the reverse of what generally appeared in the press. In fact, the revisionists were friendly and knowledgeable critics; most had lived and worked in Japan; they maintained close ties to Japanese friends and colleagues; and many of them spoke Japanese fluently. Furthermore, the revisionists did not always agree on what the U.S. should do about Japan; indeed, they were often uncomfortable being lumped together.

Nevertheless, the revisionists expressed certain common views: that Japanese capitalism differed fundamentally from Western capital-

Michael Crichton is the author of the novels Jurassic Park *(1990),* Rising Sun *(1992), and* Disclosure *(1994).*

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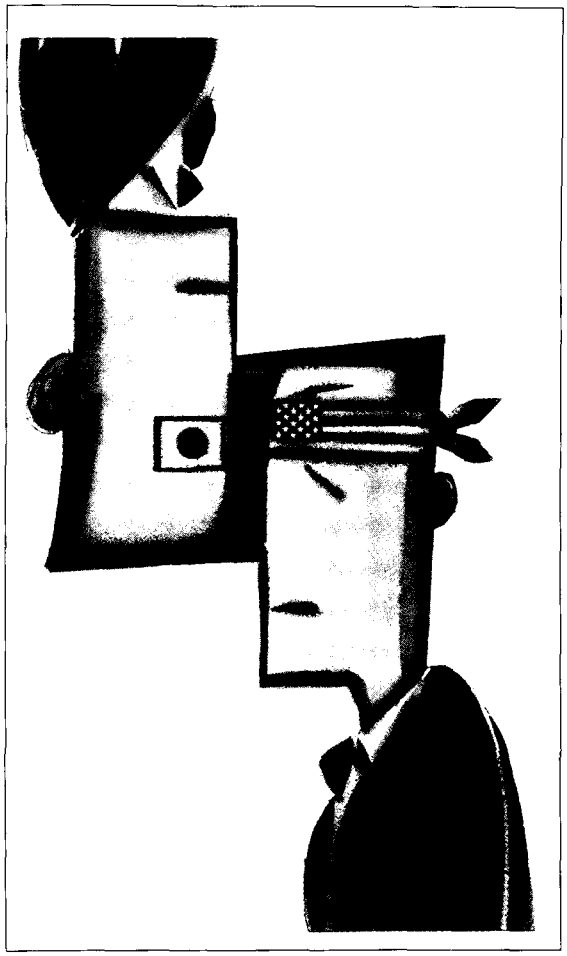
ism; that Japanese companies pursued strategies different from their Western counterparts; that the American government has failed to comprehend the differences between the two systems; and that the economic consequences of this misconception for America were potentially dire. These rather impersonal, systems-oriented views provoked a fury of vitriolic, *ad hominem* attacks within the United States.



Despite intense critical reaction, many revisionist ideas have lately won some measure of acceptance. In academic circles, the term "revisionism" has been replaced by "comparative capitalism," since there is now wide agreement that the Western and Asian economies do in fact differ. The history of the U.S. government's dealings with Japan during the Cold War has brought to light several unsavory episodes, not easily defended by anyone. The Clinton administration has been more insistent about addressing the trade deficit with Japan, in the process legitimizing many revisionist views.

Even the term "Japan-bashing" went briefly out of favor after the *Columbia Journalism Review* reported that Robert C. Angel, an American working for the Japanese-funded Japan Economic Institute, invented the term in 1977 as a way to stifle debate, including legitimate debate, on Japan. The phrase was only too successful. Angel said, "I view that modest public relations success with some shame and disappointment," and added, "Those people who use [the term] have the distinction of being my intellectual dupes."

But the list of intellectual dupes is long, and continues shamelessly to grow; recently Senator Bradley criticized the Clinton trade policy as "Japan-bashing." The casual indifference with which American politicians and the American press employ disinformation terminology created by a foreign competitor is a wonder to behold. One might have thought that once its history were known, "Japan-bashing," like "nigger," would become an unacceptable term in intelligent discourse. Yet against all logic, "Japan-bashing" is making a comeback.

Which brings us to the central concern of Fallows' new book: the peculiar intellectual inflexibility of the West in dealing with Asia. *Looking at the Sun* takes the structure of a personal tour of the major Asian nations; along the way, Fallows reviews the history of Western and Asian economic ideas over the last two hundred years. The book is disarming: informal, easy-going, and extremely well-written. But the casual surface conceals an underlying rigor, and a profound concern: How, Fallows asks, do ideas about economies take hold, and what facts are neccessary to dislodge them? Why has it been so difficult for Amer-

Peter Kuper

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icans to look clearly at Japan and the other countries of Asia?

One answer is a simple imperviousness to contrary fact by influential observers. Fallows provides many examples of this intransigence. Since the current trade dispute seems to revolve around the problems of Motorola in Japan, it is perhaps worth reviewing one of the most spectacular of Fallows' cases: Labor Secretary Robert Reich's views on Motorola in the context of the global economy.

In 1989, Reich, then a lecturer at Harvard, published an article in *The New Republic* in which he argued that U.S. trade pressure on Japan to open its markets to Motorola was misguided, since Motorola actually made its cellular phones in Kuala Lumpur. Motorola immediately responded that this was untrue; their phones, they said, were manufactured in Illinois by American workers.

Robert C. Angel, an American working for the Japanese-funded Japan Economic Institute, invented the term "Japan-bashing" in 1977 as a way to stifle debate on Japan. The phrase was only too successful. Angel said, "I view that modest public relations success with some shame and disappointment," and added, "Those people who use [the term] are my intellectual dupes."

Six months later, in an influential article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Reich repeated his assertion that Motorola made its cellular phones in Kuala Lumpur. Once again, Motorola denied the claim, writing both to the *Harvard Business Review* and to Reich personally.

A year later, in *The American Prospect*, Reich again stated that Motorola's cellular phones and pagers were "mainly" manufactured in Kuala Lumpur. Again, Motorola vigorously denied that this was so, although by now it must have been clear to them that an appeal to the facts would do no good. And it didn't: In his next book, *The Work of Nations*, Reich again repeated the erroneous Motorola example as evidence of why current U.S. trade policies toward Japan were misguided.

Fallows recounts Reich's handling of Motorola in detail and goes on to document similar errors in Reich's statements about semi-conductors and high definition television. Although Fallows is too polite to say so, the conclusion is inescapable: A major cabinet figure in the Clinton administration, and a leading expert on the global economy, simply does not know what he is talking about. Reich is an intelligent man, but he has been praised for his theory of the global economy which states that the nationality of corporations no longer matters. Understandably, he may be reluctant to accept data to the contrary—data which suggest that national origin still matters very much. (Einstein once said that we should be careful about our theories, because a theory determines not only what we observe, but what we *can* observe.)

Fallows makes the astute point that if examples from business to support Reich's view were plentiful, the secretary would long ago have abandoned the Motorola case as more trouble than it was worth. Why make one's argument with disputed cases, if indisputable cases can be used instead? Fallows implies that Reich has clung stubbornly to Motorola because better examples cannot be found—because Reich's theory itself is deeply flawed, and ultimately cannot be supported by data. The economies of modern nations do not work as Reich would have us think they do. On the

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contrary, most evidence shows that corporations are not truly global in their effects; they are likely to favor, and disproportionately benefit, their countries of origin.

If contemporary ideas about the global economy are often misconceived and fanciful, the economic behavior of the Asian nations goes a long way toward explaining why. Fallows argues persuasively that the powerful, emerging economies of Asian nations simply do not work according to established Western economic thinking, and in fact reveal the inadequacy of such thinking. This is the central concern of Fallows' book, expressed in its opening paragraph: "The [West] is awash in information about. . . Asia. But it lacks. . . the right theories to give that information coherence and shape." It is the goal of Fallows' personal tour of nations and economic history to come up with the right theories.

Fallows' answer begins with his discovery, in a bookstore near the campus of Hitotsubashi University, of a rare English translation of the work of a nineteenth-century German economist, Friedrich List. Well known in Asian universities, and carefully studied by Asian economists, List has been so thoroughly forgotten by Anglo-American economists that Fallows has been unable to obtain his work in translation anywhere in the West.

Fallows' extended discussion of List, and what has been overlooked by the Anglo-American economic tradition, leads the reader to a markedly different concept of why economies exist, and how they behave. In doing so, Fallows contradicts nearly all the conventional precepts of Western economic dogma. He directs our attention back to the centrality of raw economic power; he re-emphasizes the importance of nations as economic units; he makes the case for guided economic development; he explains the strengths of an economy that favors the producer instead of the consumer; he teases out the inevitable, essential interrelations of government and business.

As he proceeds, it becomes clear why Fallows has chosen to write this book in an informal, unthreatening tone. Handling potent material, his goal is to persuade, and he knows it will not be easy. In a secular world where economic dogma has replaced religious dogma, Fallows is openly heretical. No doubt he will face a vigorous and *ad hominem* counterattack. (*Ad hominem* attack is the secular, information-age equivalent of burning at the stake.)

But whatever form the criticism takes, one suspects that events are now firmly on Fallows' side. Reviewers rarely consider what authors know only too well—that their books will still be around in five or ten years. A book is a bet, and the stake is the author's reputation. Fallows' 1989 work, *More Like Us*, holds up well, and in many ways appears more relevant now than it did then. I anticipate a similar fate for *Looking at the Sun*.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, it is increasingly clear that the West has failed to understand what the Asian economies are doing, and why they have succeeded so spectacularly for so long. And it is increasingly agreed—if only in private—that traditional Western economic thinking cannot adequately explain the Asian success (or even, for that matter, earlier American periods of economic success). Thus a new theory must sooner or later arise, and become the new dogma.

In *Looking at the Sun*, James Fallows has given a clear, elegantly stated contribution to that new and emerging debate. It is, in my view, an exceptional effort, and a great gift. □

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Political Booknotes

Divided We Fall: Gambling With History in the Nineties
Haynes Johnson
Norton, $25
By Timothy Noah

If any proof were needed that the culture of TV gab is polluting print journalism, this book is it. The author, Haynes Johnson, is a longtime panelist on "Washington Week in Review," and reading his new tome is not unlike clicking the remote from channel to channel. "More than anything else it is fear over the economic future that most powerfully affects Americans." (Click!) "Public schools, once the glory of American democracy, the way to a better life for generations of immigrants and the binding glue of economic and social classes, have become society's dumping ground." (Click!) "Despite the end of legal segregation, de facto segregation still exists." (Click!) "Violence in America is increasing; civility and attempts to reach consensus are declining." (Click!) "Awareness of a new life-threatening menace like AIDS, striking suddenly and spreading through the culture, intensifies apprehension and stress felt by numerous Americans." (Click! Click!)

I don't mean to belittle the pile of urgent national problems through which Johnson rummages; it is real. But it is also by now familiar and deserves from journalists more than the march of platitudes to which it is routinely subjected on TV public affairs shows and, increasingly, in pompous "opinion leader" books like this.

Johnson may bridle at being characterized as a pundit; after all, his longtime print specialty has been writing about social problems through the voices of ordinary, outside-the-Beltway Americans. But the people in this book come across not as individuals whose particular experiences shed new or surprising light on a subject but as two-dimensional stand-ins for various predictable points of view. They disgorge their least interesting opinions (i.e., the ones most likely to fit whatever bland point Johnson is trying to make), and then retreat to the anonymity whence they came. Consider:

➤ Larry Pugh, who manages a hospital in Waterloo, Iowa: "I see a serious deterioration, almost an eradication, of the middle class that I grew up in." Next!

➤ Luis Guillen, a Latino senior at the University of Wisconsin: "I have a lot of friends of Mexican descent who refuse to speak English." Next!

➤ Amy Dickenson, a research assistant (well, all right, *Johnson*'s research assistant, though he doesn't say so until the acknowledgements): "I know that the world I knew as a child, living on a small dairy farm, has disappeared as surely as if it were blown off the planet." Thanks for dropping by!

This once-over-lightly approach trivializes the problems Johnson writes about, especially since he clearly has no interest in considering any bold approaches to solving them. Though Johnson's attention span seems shorter now, he's been at this for years. In Timothy Crouse's book on the 1972 campaign, *The Boys on the Bus*, one national political reporter said this of Johnson's lengthy *Washington Post* mood-of-the-country pieces: "[Johnson] tells me what's happening, but he can't explain it." Today, the effect on the reader is the same. It produces an overpowering and destructive urge to pooh-pooh every contemporary problem cited by Johnson, much as Ben Wattenberg did a few years ago in *The Good News Is the Bad News Is Wrong*, a perverse and unconvincing book that dismissed most of the social ailments commonly diagnosed in the mass media.

I defy any reader to remember any striking details about Johnson's collection of ordinary Americans, all of whom are presented as uniformly saintly. Great writers who work in this form—like George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, his classic account of the deplorable working conditions of miners in the prewar north of England—show

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their respect for the people they write about by presenting them in all their human complexity. Orwell, though a profound egalitarian, wasn't afraid to tell his readers how much he disliked some of the miners he encountered. Of one out-of-work Scottish miner, he wrote: "Like so many unemployed men he spent too much time reading newspapers, and if you did not head him off he would discourse for hours about such things as the Yellow Peril, trunk murders, astrology, and the conflict between religion and science."

Can you imagine Haynes Johnson ever saying anything that irreverent about one of The People? Even before he became a respectable TV fixture, Johnson, when reporting on his conversations with concerned Americans, never departed in tone from a familiar blend of piety and condescension. In a 1981 essay in *The New Republic*, Michael Kinsley burlesqued Johnson's style:

> I'm just back from Out There. . . . taking the pulse of the nation, speaking to millions of ordinary Americans, be they shopkeepers, or baseball fans, or Presbyterians, and all of them agree with remarkable unanimity that this is a very critical time for our nation. . . . Americans are nervous, yet they remain calm. They have lost faith, yet they retain, I think, an underlying confidence. They are certain, yet somehow unsure. . . . For me to pass among the American people at this fleeting yet crucial moment in history, touching an outstretched hand here, accepting a gentle kiss on the foot there, was as stirring and moving for me as a journalist as it was for them as the American people.

You think Kinsley was exaggerating? Here's the real thing:

> More and more, Americans are affixing responsibility for the nation's troubles on the country and its leaders—*and* on themselves. They do not need to be told that their country no longer enjoys the unsurpassed position it held for a generation after World War II. Everyone knows this. Yet they also know America still possesses enormous resources, backed by an energetic, resourceful people. As the historian D.W. Brogan noted long ago, the hardest task for a people forced to change is to acquire new attitudes and unlearn old lessons. Americans I met understand this. . . .

OK, so what exactly is Johnson's point? For that, you have to go to the title. The point is, we are divided as a nation—by class, race, region, mutual suspicion, etc. Agreed. But Johnson hasn't the vaguest notion what to do about this, and for much of the book, as he lurches groggily from one tangent or another, one is liable to forget this *is* the point. The good news, Johnson finally concludes, is that Americans are more interested in solving long-term problems (like the deficit) than they were during the get-mine-first, live-for-the-minute 1980s, and that this was expressed when they elected Bill Clinton president. Americans may be divided, Johnson argues, but they are increasingly willing to sacrifice in the name of the country as a whole.

Can this be true? I hope so, and sometimes I even think so. But if you want the evidence, don't go looking for it here.

Timothy Noah, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is a reporter for* The Wall Street Journal.

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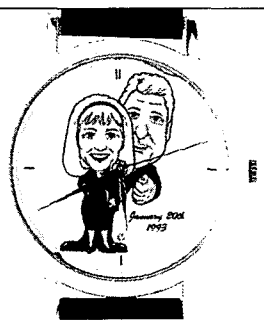

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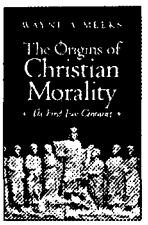

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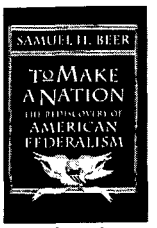

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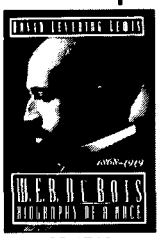

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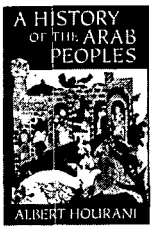

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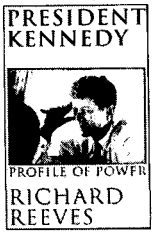

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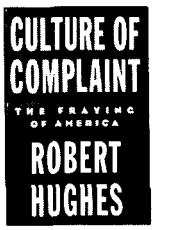

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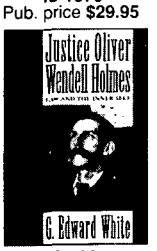

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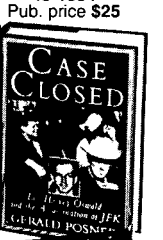

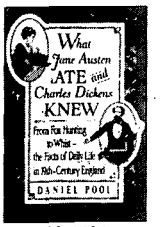

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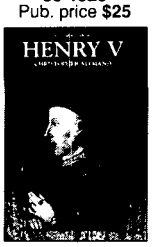

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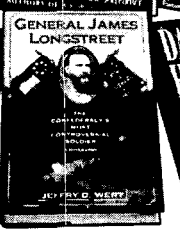

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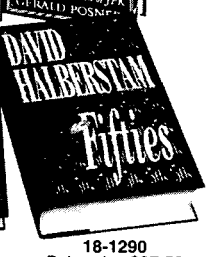

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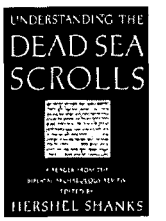

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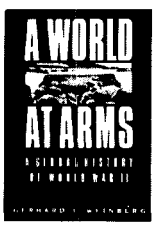

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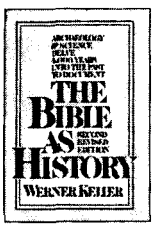

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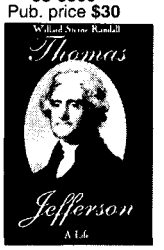

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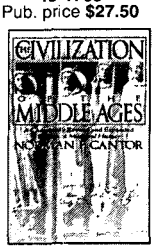

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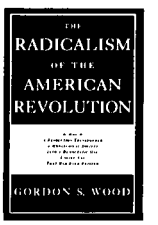

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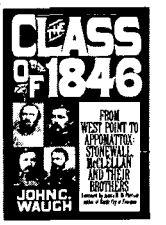

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